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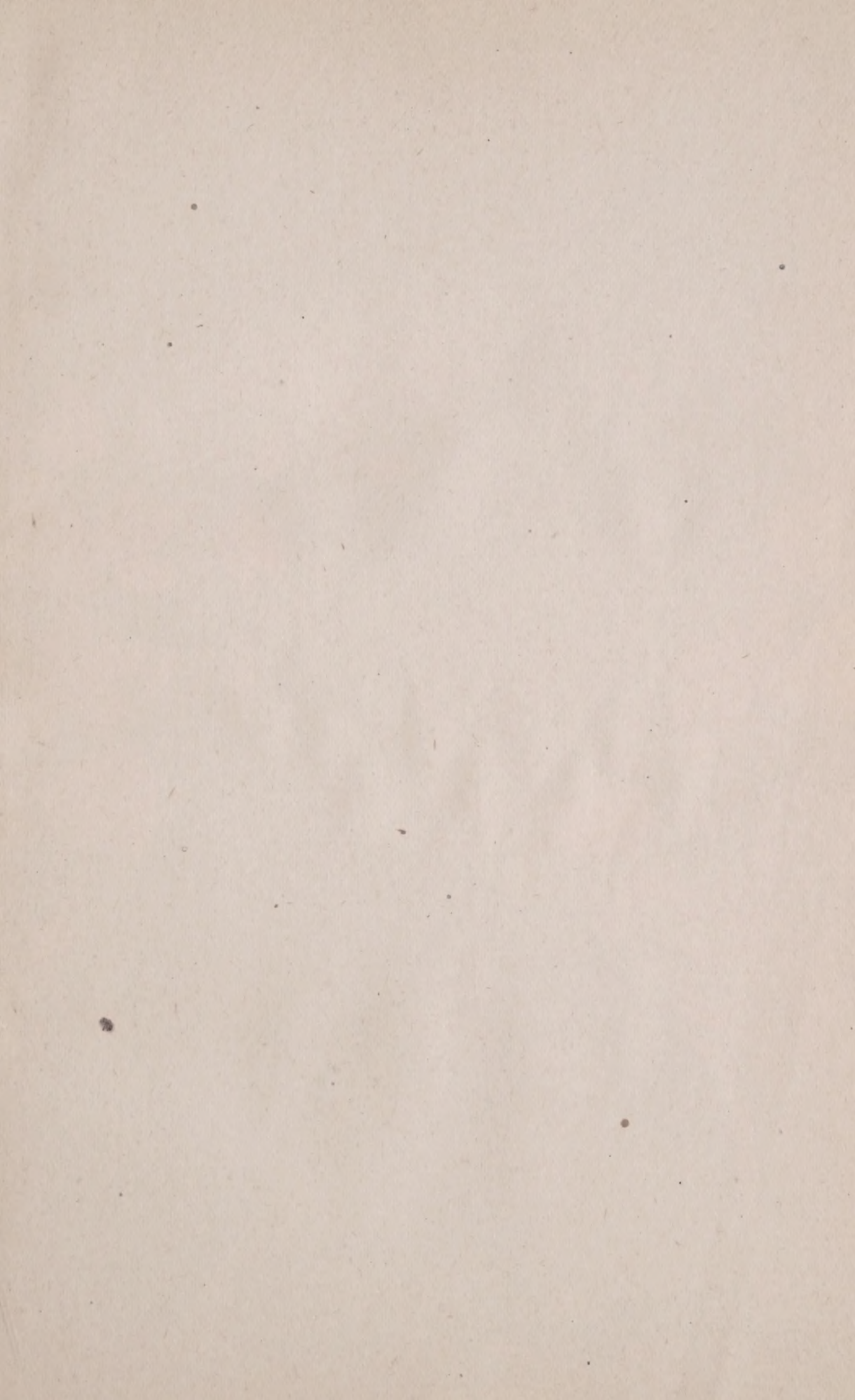




















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THE BRIDE ELECT.  
BY ANNIE ASHMORE.

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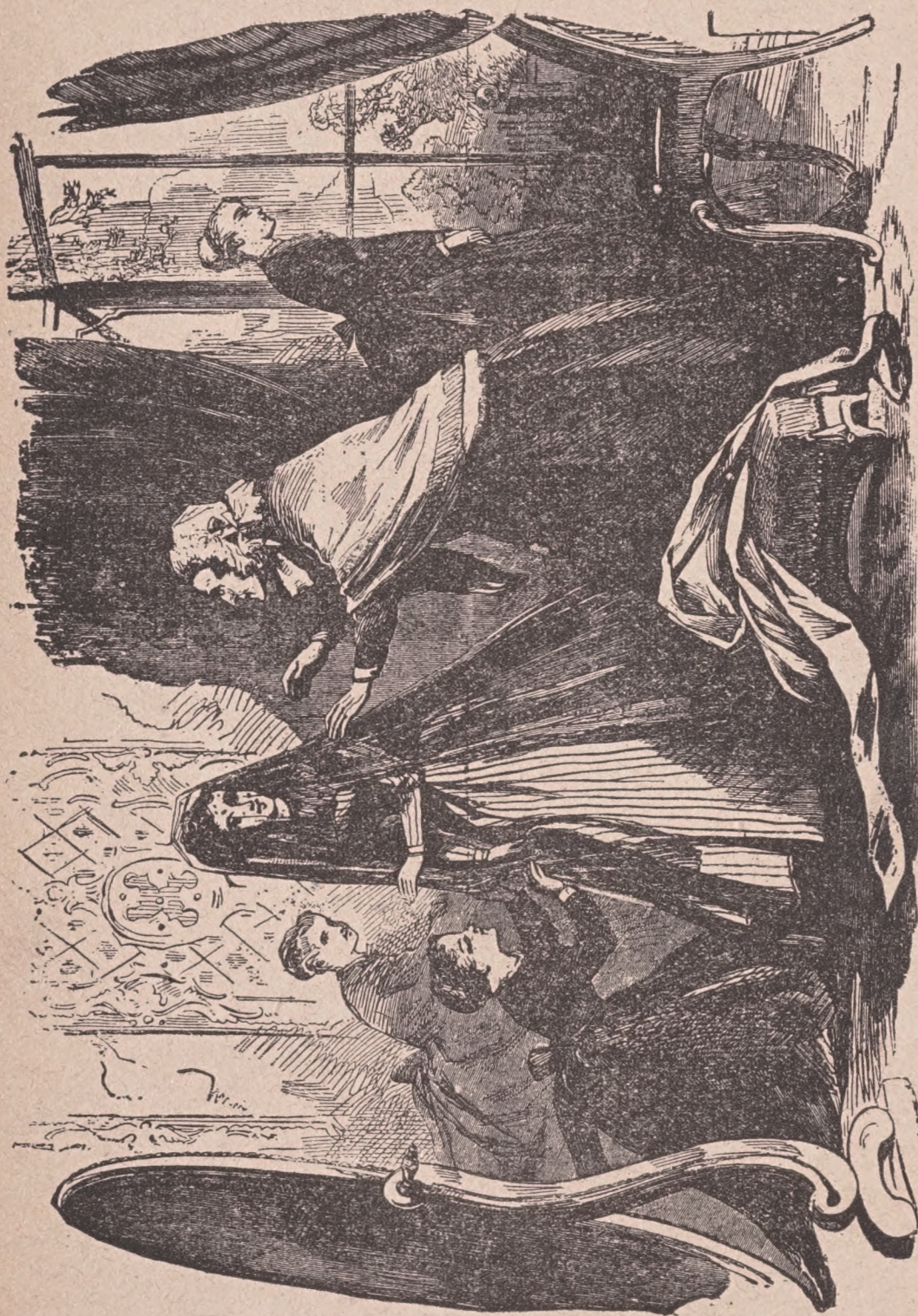
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"FLORICE, PUT THE VAIL OFF. IT'S NOT LUCKY FOR THE BRIDE."—(P. 7.)



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## THE BRIDE ELECT;

OR,

The Doom of the Double Roses.

BY

ANNIE ASHMORE,

Author of "Beautiful Rienzi," "Corinne's Ransom," "Waiting for Him," "The Diamond Collar," etc.

NEW YORK:

STREET & SMITH, Publishers,  
31 Rose Street.



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# THE BRIDE ELECT.

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## CHAPTER I.

### A STEP WITH ALEXANDER.

At five o'clock, one July afternoon, a lark was soaring in upper air over the city of Edinburgh, and, poised on tremulous wings, its dun plumes fairly quivering with joy, it sang its loud, ecstatic pæan as if it would sing its little heart out. It gazed with a bird's brightest intelligence at the lovely map that lay beneath, where the kindly sun lit up the peaks of the Salisbury Craigs into spikes of gold, painted Arthur's Seat into a gigantic emerald, and immured hoary Corstorphine into mild beauty, while the Pentland Hills crouched, lion-like, amid their blue mists over the glittering city on its triple throne, and the Firth of Forth, dazzling as liquid silver, kissed Galina's feet.

It was west of Edinburgh, where stood a tall, old mansion, planted amid turf and trees, and arabesques of flowers, and girdled by a quiet lane in front, a turbid canal at the rear.

Four young ladies were disposed in various attitudes of negligence or industry around a table, while a lady, old enough to insure respect and firm enough in expression to exact obedience, matroned the gay household. The dainty carpet of sweet sea tints and creamy lights, the fantastically



elegant lounges, and the richly clothed tables, were each heaped with the snowy waves of lace, lawn, and muslin that comprised the work of the merry group. A robe of filmy tulle lay huddled on the piano, wreaths of crisp crape and shimmering lace garlanded the harp, a chaplet of orange-blossoms in a nest of sheer white satin reposed on a fat velvet foot cushion.

But there was one who stood apart, her back to the bridal array, her tender, dreamy face looking out into the sweet summer. A stately creature—tall, well-poised, graceful, with changeful depths in her dark eyes, and flashing tides on her rich cheek, with a lovesome mouth, though resolute, and a nose that Lady Jane Grey, or, better still, a Charlotte Corday, might have had—straight, patient, heroic, with the faintest possible chiseling off the point, as one might correct by one delicate touch to the too perfect nose of a statue.

She leaned against the casement, one foot on the low sill, her brow pressing the cold pane, her hands loosely linked and hanging with careless grace at one side. She was not hearing her merry bride-maids as they sewed and chatted, and she was not seeing the lovely view without, as the trees whispered, and the flower-petals sailed on the summer air; yet her soul was filled with the cheer of perfect happiness, and the earth seemed very fair to her.

A little maiden rose from her place, crying to her companions, with an arch glance:

“See, Madge, Jessie, Marian, now we have finished the vail, let us try the effect. I shall personate the bride, you shall vail me—gracefully—so!”

She was roguishly regarding her own reflections in the opposite mirror, through a mist of sheeny tulle, when the elder lady turned her head, caught sight of the pretty mimic, and cried, hastily:

“Florice—Florice! put the vail off! What are you



about? You mustn't wear a bride's things on mortal frame till she has worn them; it's not—not *lucky* for the bride."

"Oh, Mrs. Ellathorne!" and "Ha! ha! Mrs. Ellathorne!" burst from the irreverent bride-maids; but Florice Calvert, sister of the bride, hastily threw off the bridal veil, with a glance at the silent figure in the window.

Softly she folded the veil, and softly laid it down, her eyes yearning as the brooding dove's, fixed on her sister, till, waked by silence from a smiling reverie, she turned her calm, noble countenance toward them.

In a moment Florice was at her side, brimming with impulsive emotion.

"Glencora, my dear, my dear!" she murmured. "You shall never meet ill fortune, if Florice be your fate!"

Glencora took the passionate, upturned face between her two hands, and stooping, kissed it on each cheek; then, with a little sigh, succeeded by a sudden little smile that transfigured the majesty of her expression into childish radiance, she put Florice aside, and leaned on the casement again.

Mrs. Ellathorne cleared her throat, and looked at her, stitched busily a minute, and then broke up her charmed silence.

"Glencora, will you continue your jotting?" Upon which the bride started, and, with blushing cheeks, picked up a small black morocco note-book, gilt-edged and clasped, and tapping upon the board with the slender pencil she had drawn from its sheath, waited, with bright regards fastened on Mrs. Ellathorne.

"You had arrived at Venice in the second week of August," began that lady; "write how long you will probably remain. A week? Then the last of August sees you *en route* for Switzerland. No? You will not wander farther? Then just add the date of your probable return,



tear out the leaf, and give it to me. Jot down a duplicate for yourself."

Glencora's pencil paused; her eyes were again wandering over the sunny lawn, and down the long avenue—this time her gaze concentrated, her lips thrilled with repressed tenderness.

Some one comes, clanging behind him the black iron gates that form the culminating point of the green vista, walking hastily, with swinging cane and firm foot, who quickly divines who stands in the parlor window, whose pace quickens at the sight—a gentleman with frank and fearless eye—graceful—gracious.

Glencora sees him through a bride's eyes; and he is very comely.

"Hush, girls!" ejaculated Florice to her chattering comrades; "here comes Alexander!"

Glencora dropped her note-book, and, touching the spring of the casement, which slid back, Alexander Buccleugh leaned against the window post, among the honeysuckles, and looked at Glencora until she drew closer to him, and put her two hands in his.

"You'll come in, won't you?" murmured she, smiling at his whispered greeting.

"No, bonniebel!"—very decidedly—"not just now. I've just come from Prince's street, and was going home, but thought I needn't pass Lady-Bank without running up to show you what I chose. Will you look, Glencora?"

He looks proud and contented. To-morrow is his wedding-day, and Glencora is his bride-elect.

He took from his pocket a jewel-case, opened it, and exposed a pair of pearl bracelets, whose translucent drops gleamed through a fairy-like tracery of gold.

"Manacles for me?" she said, archly.

"No; for Mrs. Alexander Buccleugh!" whispered he back.



Glencora bent over him a moment, with soft, womanly confidence, and praised the gift, and, in lower tones, praised, perhaps, the giver.

"And now I must go," said Alexander, presently. "Madge, Marian, Jessie, Florice, are you all there? Ah! what a picture!"

Looking past Glencora, he surveyed them all at their graceful toil, received their merry reproaches at his haste with small edification, and then took Glencora's hand.

"Come with me a little way," said Alexander.

She looked round at Mrs. Ellathorne, with habitual reference to her judgment.

"Just to the gate, Glencora," urged he.

"Too sunny for her now, Alexander," objected Mrs. Ellathorne.

"Just a step, ma'am. Come, my girlie."

So Glencora laughed, and disobeyed Mrs. Ellathorne; and as she stepped over the low sill, her trailing drapery shook the honeysuckles, and the larks rushed out with a whir, and sprang straight up into the sunny ether, singing loudly.

Arm in arm they paced down the long, graveled walk. The tall beach and graceful lady-birch arched the way, and flung green shadows, fretted with golden light, upon them.

Glencora leaned upon Alexander's strong arm; she seemed a willing captive, as he lured her still farther and farther down the walk, and the bride-maids in the drawing-room exchanged smiling glances as Alexander plucked a spray from the prickly holly-hedge by the iron gate, and placed it in her blue-black hair, then played with one of the long, loosely curled tresses that fell low down her back. Splendid tresses they were, and tied together at the back of the head, in a rich cluster, by a narrow green ribbon.

They saw Alexander open the gate and tempt her far-



ther; they saw her falter and look back at the house; and they saw him take her handkerchief—a small one, laced at the edge—fold it from corner to corner, and tie it under her chin; and then she went with him, and he shut the gate between her and Lady-Bank.

“Foolish!” exclaimed Mrs. Ellathorne. “Glencora knows she can’t go out with him just now; and the sun will give her a headache. I wish——”

She stopped, as a servant opened the door, and stood waiting to speak, some snowy lace over her arm.

“Well, Jean?”

“Please, ma’am, here’s the lace that Miss Florice was wantin’ ironed, and, please, cook wants to see you.”

She still waited at the door, her eyes fastened on the still visible Glencora, walking in the lane with Alexander.

“May I take Miss Calvert’s cloak and bonnet, ma’am?” said the girl, respectfully.

“Yes, yes, Jean; you are thoughtful. Go quick,” said Mrs. Ellathorne, leaving the room; and Jean did so.

Florice watched her from the window as she glided down the leafy avenue, Glencora’s long cloak over her arm, her little bonnet in her hand; and, as she watched, Glencora’s favorite hound tore round the house, and ran after the maid.

Jean angrily ordered it back in vain. She appeared to threaten it, but the creature only stood as long as she stood, and then moved after her every step she took.

Florice’s heart was very light, as her eyes roamed over Lady-Bank, after the maid had disappeared on her mission.

Florice loved her sister with no common love; she looked up to her as to some pure, superior spirit, whose full happiness was but a reward for such purity of heart. From her post at the window, she could see the pointed gables of Alexander Buccleugh’s lovely summer residence—Glencora’s



future home—for it was the next estate to Lady-Bank, and equal, if not superior, in beauty to the latter.

And Lady-Bank was no common suburban nest. The situation was bewitching, and the mansion itself a marvel of architectural grace.

Lady-Bank had been the home of the two ladies, Glencora and Florice Calvert, ever since their parents' death, many years ago.

They were both heiresses of some small property, but though Glencora had come of age three years before, she still preferred to live under the roof of her kind guardian, Captain Drummond, with her sister Florice, who was scarcely seventeen. Mrs. Ellathorne, the most discreet of widows, and the only sister of the retired captain, ruled the household with kindly hands, and brought up the captain's pretty wards in the way they should go, with irreproachable integrity. And so it came to pass that just one year ago, when Mr. Alexander Buccleugh bought the beautiful estate of Denburn, and became nearest neighbor of the gallant captain's family, and drove every morning past lovely Lady-Bank, on his way to the great United Kingdom bank, in Prince's street, of which he was principal manager, and sometimes in the dewy summer evenings caught a glimpse of the two sweet ladies Calvert, as he returned to his bachelor's abode. Sometimes it happened that his thoughts lingered in the cool Lady-Bank avenue long after his eyes were resting on the aristocratic splendors of "Denburn Den," as he was wont to style that mansion. And, of course, nothing was more natural than for the young banker to pay his respects, at the earliest possible date, to his nearest neighbors, and to find in courtly Captain Drummond a most desirable friend, in Mrs. Ellathorne a sympathizing matronly adviser, in pretty Florice the best of little confidantes, in beautiful, regal, bewitching Glencora, his heart's delight, and his life's most envied companion. To



all of which arrangements of the young people, the captain and his sister said never a word of dissent.

These two families lived some two miles from Edinburgh, on handsome estates, upon the east bank of the canal, which flowed inland to Glasgow, Arbroath, etc., and was lost in the heart of the city. Captain Drummond's house itself stood in the center of the grounds; a spacious lawn stretched in front, beyond which lay a handsome garden, whose ivied wall shut out the quiet lane which led up to the two houses. Behind the houses, and at the foot of the grounds, the canal meandered, being private ground on the Lady-Bank and Denburn side, but much frequented on the other side by foot passengers, and carriages, and the sturdy barge horses.

A lovely spot was this one which Florice Calvert's eyes scanned, this lovely summer eve, and from Lady-Bank's drawing-room windows she could see, over the hawthorn thicket between the two estates, the roof of Denburn House, her sister's future home.

In about fifteen minutes, when she was again seated at her work, singing gayly to her companions, Alexander stepped through the window, alone.

"Where is she? Have I arrived first?" were his first two questions.

He was breathless, as if he had walked fast, and he looked a trifle uneasy.

"Ah! but where did you put her?" cried saucy Madge Severn.

"Come, Bluebeard, where is Fatima?" teased Marian Gordon.

"Dear old Wehr-wolf, you must disgorge Red Riding-hood!" quoth flaxen-haired Jessie Buccleugh, a connection of his own, from Ayr.

Mrs. Ellathorne came in at this moment, and catching sight of Alexander:



“Glencora!” cried she, quickly, meaning to chide; “go straight up stairs, and lie down. You are making poor——”

She ceased abruptly, looking vainly for Glencora, and at length turned inquiringly to Alexander:

“Has she come home with you?”

He smiled, flushed a little, stammered, and at last blurted out, more to Florice than to anybody else:

“A little freak of Bonniebel’s. She would make a bet with me who would be home first. She came by the walk inside the wall—I by the canal. I’ve won the bet, and now I’ll go out and meet her.”

Without another word, he strode down the avenue again, and struck through the private path inside the thick holly hedge, and from thence to his own grounds.

“Foolish!” again said Mrs. Ellathorne. “I wonder if Jean gave her the cloak!” and she rang hastily for her.

Another maid appeared.

“Where’s Miss Calvert’s maid?”

“As I came frae the kitchen, ma’am, I met her comin’ in aff the green wi’ her arms fu’ o’ the clean clothes.”

“Send her up, Molly.”

In two minutes Jean stood in the door-way, her face crimson, her pale eyes reading the carpet, hot and panting.

“What have you been doing with yourself, girl?” demanded the mistress, in surprise.

“I’m ironing.”

“When did you return?”

“Not three minutes ago, ma’am.”

“Did you find your mistress?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Where?”

“Standing at Mr. Buccleugh’s gate with Mr. Buccleugh.”

“And you gave her her bonnet and cloak?”

“I did, ma’am.”

“And——”



Mrs. Ellathorne made a long pause, during which she glanced uneasily down the avenue, and Jean more than once wiped her dry lips with her apron.

“I wish she would come back.”

As this needed no reply, Jean only courtesied again, waited a moment, and with the customary “Anything more, ma’am?” finally withdrew.

Another interval, during which the ladies relaxed into chatting again, and Florice sang more songs; and then Alexander appeared, for the second time, alone.

After a sweeping glance around the room, his eyes dilated and darkened. He stood confounded.

The bride-maids dropped their needles. Florice rose, with blanched lips and arrested eyes. Mrs. Ellathorne swooped forward, and demanded, with quiet authority:

“Alexander, where is Glencora?”

“Truly, I don’t know,” said poor Alexander, helplessly. “I’ve walked the grove, and the lane, and the canal-side, and I’ve been over Denburn grounds; and if she hasn’t slipped in and gone up to her room unobserved, it’s—it’s very strange. Stay—I have it!” he cried, a sudden beam dispersing his perplexity. “Glencora said something about going down through my grounds to see that old nurse of hers, and bid her good-by. She talked about it before we made that foolish wager. Perhaps she ran off there alone, not caring for me to see her parting with the old lady. I’ll go there for her.”

He was going off in a wild hurry this time, but Florice touched him on the arm, and, hardly able to articulate, begged him to take her with him. Mrs. Ellathorne made no objection, though by this time the long twilight had set in, and the breeze blew fresher.

In a few minutes Florice tripped down the shallow stone steps, and joined him as he stood impatiently by the window, poking his cane into the pink, moaning sea-shells and



smooth, tinted shore stones, heaped into the niches of the steps; and they hurried down the walk, he treading quietly over the crunching gravel, she, in her tremor and vague alarm, walking on the flowers, and tripping on the trim boxwood, and breaking the tall lilies with her skirts as they struck into the path to the thicket.

Alexander offered her his arm, and noted, with gathering gloom, her pallor; but he did not speak, only slashing the crisp tops off the flowering fern.

“Florice, my dear little girl,” broke from him at length, “you do not fear for Glencora, do you?”

She glanced earnestly into his grave but unshadowed eyes, and breathed freer.

“No, Alexander, if you do not,” she faltered. “But just tell me this—was she just a little piqued when she parted from you?”

“Piqued at me, Florice, do you mean?” he asked, with curious incredulity.

She nodded.

“No, indeed! Ha! ha! little sister! that’s not the way to be married to-morrow!”

Alexander seemed not a bit anxious about the result of their search, and he knew just how it was, so why should she feel so startled. She would not. Glencora was not a fool.

“She’s at nurse’s, all safe. We’ll find her there won’t we, Alexander?” said Florice, assuring herself. But she well remembered, Alexander only smiled. But when they stood before the Widow McGowan’s ivy swathed cottage, and she bustled out in her white muslin cap, tied with a broad, black ribbon, and came down through her tiny “kail-yard” with a smiling old face of welcome, it needed not a word to tell Florice that she must seek further for her sister. Not so Alexander. He almost lost temper when the nurse said no.



"Nonsense, Mrs. McGowan, she can't be anywhere else. She must have come while you were out somewhere."

"That I was na'," cried she; "my bairn gid me a fareweel this mornin', and I hae 'na seen her since."

Florice pulled Alexander away, and in the gloaming the two gazed at each other blankly.

"Come home quick, Alexander!" whispered Florice, fearfully. "Something has happened. Once—twice—now for a run!"

She broke from him, and ran nimbly back across the Denburn grounds, easily outstripping Alexander, who paused a moment to ask his servants if any of them had seen Miss Calvert.

She was walking down the public lane, panting and trembling, when he made up to her and put her hand within his arm again.

"Florice, compose yourself. What do you fear? Unaccountable, as it seems, she may have gone down to the Long Pier to meet the captain. This is the hour he comes over to Edinburgh; the Dysart and Kirkaldy ferry-boat is just touching the quay now," looking at his watch, "and they'll both come up together after an hour in Prince's street. Pooh! what could possibly harm Glencora? She's at home now; we've missed her."

But he was hurrying over the lane with unwonted haste. Was Alexander at last alarmed?

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## CHAPTER II.

### OSSIAN.

There was little room to hope for her reappearance in the aspect of the house, as they entered through the iron gates, and hurried up the leafy avenue. Wild alarms seemed rife on this sweet July evening; lights were flashing through the great rooms—from the grand drawing-room, where the wedding wreaths were arching the banquet-tables, already glittering with their load of silver, for the wedding feast—to the servants' dormitories up in the fourth story. Lanterns gleamed through the trees, and sometimes a faint voice, sharp with something more than anxiety, cried:

"Glencora! Glencora!"



"What madness! Where can she have gone?" exclaimed Alexander Buccleugh, stopping in his break-neck pace to stare blankly around. "I certainly expected to find her returned."

"Oh, Alexander!" sobbed Florice, losing all presence of mind, and wringing her hands hysterically. "You *must* have an inkling of where she might have gone. What did she say when you parted?"

"Hush, Florice, dear—nonsense! Crying already? Glennie's not a child to turn frantic about, if she doesn't report herself every half-hour. And, I declare," looking at his watch, "we make as much fuss as if she were gone three days, and she has only been missing half an hour."

Florice dried her tears. Really they were making too much out of a trifle. Why need Jessie Buccleugh and the other girls shout her name through the woods in that unseemly way?—the night before the wedding, too, when all should be quiet and proper! They ascended the steps and stood in the dark passage, almost laughing at the confusion.

"Little mousie not trapped yet?" cried Alexander, cheerily, as Mrs. Ellathorne came down stairs—tall candle in hand.

"Not she! and I must say, Alexander, that this is a very ridiculous—indeed, an unaccountable business. She's not in the house—she's not in the grounds, and as you've again returned without her, she's not at nurse McGowan's. Very unaccountable, Alexander."

Mrs. Ellathorne regarded him with unconcealed reproach. Her hand, which held the candlestick, was covered with the wax, which, in her rapid movement, must have fallen boiling on, and been allowed to fall, unheeded. Evidently Mrs. Ellathorne was even more terrified than she wished to betray.

"I don't think there's any real cause for your alarm," said Alexander, in a voice that trembled a little. "You know the captain has not yet returned; perhaps she went to meet him. She said something about it, when we were walking in the lane."

"Nonsense! Glencora would never allow herself to be seen publicly just now; besides, she had no companion."

"Oh, I wish guardie was well at home!" sighed Florice, going to lean dismally in the still open window. Presently



she turned round and looked into the room. "I wish you'd get the girls called in," she said; "they are making an awful disturbance, crying over the place that way. It's clear she's not in Lady-Bank or they'd have found her."

Mrs. Ellathorne stepped to her side with a hand-bell, and rang it vigorously.

Alexander went down the steps, and stood below them on the gravel walk.

"I'll go and meet the girls, and tell them. They might think she was found when they hear the bell."

Then he went down through the shrubbery toward the canal, and was lost to view. Mrs. Ellathorne looked at him as he retreated, then took Florice into the parlor, shut the window, drew the blind, lit the gas-lamp, every jet, and extinguished the much-abused wax candle, evidently with a resolution to make the best of things.

Tripping feet now sounded, and voices, eager and excited, questioned and answered, as the great door flew open, and two of the bride-maids appeared.

"Found!" exclaimed Marian Gordon.

Florice started up.

"Isn't she found?" said Marian Gordon. "You rang?"

"No, no, no!" wailed Florice, with a burst of tears. "She's not found."

"Oh, we thought she had come back; we ran home when we heard the bell," said Miss Severn, beginning to cry too.

"Sit down, both of you," said Mrs. Ellathorne, snipping off her thread with unsteady hand. "I rang to gather you home. You and the servants are making the affair tragical with your lights and outcries; one would think there had been a *murder* instead of this silly circumstance. Now, Madge and Marian, dry your eyes, you foolish bairns, and take your work; there's much to do. Where's Jessie?"

"She saw Alexander going down to the canal, and she ran after him, to see if she went that way through the corn, for a trick, or anything."

"Humbug! *She* go for a trick, forsooth! She's gone to meet the captain, I dare say. He wanted her, I know."

They waited, and as conjecturing did not seem to improve their spirits, they waited in silence.

Presently Alexander and his cousin, Jessie, came in



together. They looked just once round the room, then sat down.

Florice's feverish eyes fixed first on Jessie's grave face, then on Alexander's gloomy, disturbed one. Florice could not make a pretense even of working now. She sat with locked hands.

The grit of light wheels sounded on the walk so suddenly, and so near, that they all started, as if by a galvanic shock.

"That's the captain!" said Mrs. Ellathorne, rising; "and Glencora, of course!"

Alexander rushed down the steps. A cab was drawn up before the door; two men were standing by the steps, one, the captain, counting money; the other, the cabman, holding out his hand for the fare.

"You needn't wait at your stand for me to-morrow," cried Captain Drummond's cheery voice, as the cabman mounted his box. "I'll be better employed by this time to-morrow evening, I hope, ha, ha! Good-night, cabby."

"Is Miss Calvert not with you?" breathed Alexander's cold lips, as the empty carriage wheeled round and disappeared.

"Oh, good-evening to you, Buccleugh. Here with the girls? But of course you are, as a bridegroom should be. What's that? Glencora not with me? Of course not. Why, Buccleugh? Good heavens, Alexander, what's the matter?"

Captain Drummond stood in the parlor door-way—a handsome, whole-souled sailor of thirty-two—a man, every inch of him, you may be sure. His bright blue eyes traveled from face to face in astonishment. Matter enough, he could see that.

"Glencora has not been seen since half-past five," said Mrs. Ellathorne, at last.

"Disappeared? Impossible!" cried the captain, knitting his brows at the mere mention of the information.

"Not that, captain," spoke up Alexander, a broad glow on his face; "not *disappeared* in the way you take it. Nobody distrusts my girl. We fear some accident."

"What accident?" demanded the captain, bluntly. "Did she leave the house alone?"

Buccleugh wiped his damp forehead, sighing heavily.

"No, captain; she left the house with me. I asked her out just for a word in the lane; she had not even a bonnet on her head. When we came to the wicket-gate of the



grove between the lands, she made a wager—'twas only a silly little bet with me—that she'd be home first, as she was in a hurry about some sewing, and she objected to my staying all the evening alone at Denburn. She was to go one way; I, the other. We parted at the little gate, and in five minutes I had reached here; but we have not seen her since."

"Which way did she go? By the canal?"

"No, indeed; she went by the private path just inside the hedge, through the high garden, parallel with the lane. I walked down by the canal, because it was longer than her way. Why, she hadn't three minutes walk between her and the parlor window—our tryst."

"You say she had no bonnet on. She couldn't have gone to see her nurse?"

"No, no, guardie; we looked there," sobbed Florice.

"She had a bonnet on. What am I thinking of?" said Alexander. "I was remembering a little lace handkerchief she had tied on her head. As we stood at Denburn gate, before we turned to come back to the little wicket, her maid came along the lane with a bonnet and cloak for her, saying that Mrs. Ellathorne had sent them. Does she know nothing about Glencora after I left her?"

"Oh, no. I think I asked her," said Mrs. Ellathorne.

"Call her up," said the captain, catching at a straw.

Jessie Buccleugh was sitting by the bell-rope; she pulled the tassel, and presently the cook appeared.

"It's not you we want," said the captain. "Where's Jean Malcolm?"

"In the kitchen, sir."

The cook looked crusty and vinegary, as only cooks can look when things go wrong.

"Send her up, cook, directly," quoth the captain.

"Ay, she may gang and hide awa', the hussie; wi' her fleerin' fires scannin' a' my cakes, to fiddle wi' her furbelows!" muttered the cook, disappearing.

Anon, the lady's-maid stood at the door.

"Jean, where did you last see your mistress?" questioned Captain Drummond.

Her face, all flushed and hot, with the veins standing out like blue cords on her temples, seemed ready to blanche into consternation.

"The captain means to ask if you saw Miss Calvert after



you fetched her her things," interposed Mrs. Ellathorne, gently.

"Indeed, I did na set een on Miss Glencora since I saw Mr. Buccleugh there buckling on her cloak at his ain gates."

"Where did you go then?" asked Alexander.

"I cam' back by the lane, sir;"—she stopped and considered—"then doon by the servants' way to the back o' the house."

"And where then?"

"I gaed ow're to the green and gathered up Miss Glencora's laces and things, and carried them into the kitchen."

"And that is all?"

Jean's pale eyes dwelt on each face in turn, the longest on Alexander Buccleugh's.

"Ay, that's a'," she answered, deliberately.

"Go, then!" exclaimed Captain Drummond, rising to his feet.

The girl lingered a moment.

"Please, ma'am," said she, addressing Mrs. Ellathorne, "Miss Glencora told me this morn, as I packed her boxes, that maybe she would gang to the town to meet Captain Drummond in the evening, if she could get through wi' the wark, for she wanted him to gang wi' her while she bought some things."

"But you see she didn't," cried the captain, impatiently. This useless waste of time was irritating him.

"Maybe so, sir; an' maybe no," murmured the girl, dropping a courtesy. "She might ha' gane ane gate and you the ither. Maybe you missed her on the road."

"Summon all the servants!" ordered the captain. "If she went, 'twas not alone; she has gone before with the gardener or his boy for an escort."

They all came in. The captain's establishment was a quiet one, as befitted a retired shipowner. There were the cook, a chambermaid, a housemaid, the young women's waiting woman, Jean Malcolm, the gardener and his boy, and finally, a confectioner's assistant, who had come to help the cook in that branch of the culinary preparations. They all came in; none were missing.

"None of you——pshaw! I needn't ask!" began Captain Drummond, looking over them. "Fact is, Miss Calvert



can't be found, and I may as well ask if any of you can say anything to the point about it?"

"They know nothing!" groaned Alexander, leaning his head dejectedly on his hand. "We must to work, captain. If she went down to Edinburgh, it must have been to visit some friends, and between this and half-past five she could not easily have returned."

Here the gardener stepped a little forward, holding his hat by the brim.

"Yer honor," said he, respectfully, "I think I wad ha' met our young leddy gif she had gane to the town atween half-past five an' half-past six, for I was a' that time wheelin' a barrow fu' o' pots o' flowers frae ane o' the gardeners in the botanical gardens—he's an auld crony o' my ain—to put alang the avenue for the morn; and I'm sure I would ha' met her on the road."

"Did you see anybody in particular in Gower Lane—any carriage, or stranger?"

"Ay!" cried the old man, with sudden intelligence; "I did meet a carriage gallopin' doon the lane. There was a gentleman on the box by the driver, an' I caught a sicht o' anither gentleman sittin' in the coach, wi' his back to the horses."

"Oh, that was Lord Kilcourcy and his nephew," interposed Alexander. "They overtook me as I was walking from the city, and told me they were driving up the road to meet a party six miles on."

"They didna gang then, sir," observed the gardener; "for I saw the ruts o' coach wheels turnin' round just ayant the wicket-gate, atween Lady-Bank an' Denburn. They maun ha' gane back."

"That I cannot say," rejoined Alexander. "I spoke to them just as I was entering the gate, and thought no more of them afterward."

"You may go now," said Captain Drummond, looking impatiently at his watch.

The domestic retired, and he stepped out into the passage, picked up his hat, cane, and gloves, and came in again.

"I think, Buccleugh, our best course is to go at once to the town, and go round Glencora's acquaintances, and after that——"

He paused, and looked round the little company of pale, trembling girls, with their anxious lady at their head.



"I don't think you need fear much," he said, trying to speak cheerfully. "Our willful bride will have taken a fancy to some rarity in Prince's street. We will be back soon; so, keep up heart, girlyes. Hester!"

Mrs. Ellathorne followed him to the door. He took her hand, and spoke gravely. He whispered, but Florice's eager ears drank in the whisper:

"Sister, don't be alarmed if some men come here by and by, to—to *drag the canal!* and don't let the girls know."

He hastened after Buccleugh, who, with headlong speed, was already half way down to the gates. He went so fast that he never heard Jessie Buccleugh's outcry as the bride's sister fell fainting to the floor.

It was chill, and almost dark now, this calm summer evening, as the two gentlemen sped down the avenue into Gower Lane.

"I'll tell you what, Drummond," exclaimed Alexander, breaking in on rather a dread silence each had shrunk from encroaching upon; "we'll just step over to Denburn and get out my mare and traps. If speed will avail anything, Houri is the one to spring to it."

"Agreed!" quoth the captain.

So they hurried up the lane, instead of down, and passed through the Denburn gates.

And so they missed seeing a sight, or rather hearing a marvel—to see, there was little. First a clink, clink, clink, adown the silent lane, coming closer; then, as the sound became distinct, mingled with it a regular snort and a respiring pant; then a light, bounding tread; then, the eyes assisting the ears, a little cloud of dust would have loomed, rolling along the middle of the road; then two red eyes; and then, just as the iron gate was reached, two white paws might be discerned tearing beneath the iron bars in eager hurry; and at last, with a louder snort, the tawny figure sprang aside to a gap in the holly hedge best known to dog-hood, wriggled through, and with long leaps sprang up to Lady-Bank.

Well, t'was nothing but Glencora's deer-hound, Ossian, wet, weary, and savage from some cause only apparent to himself, coursing home to his kennel.



## CHAPTER III.

## THE EMPTY BRIDAL DAY.

Rolling swiftly over the quiet lane, the fresh night air meeting them with rushing force in their rapid transit, the captain and Alexander proceeded on their anxious search. There was little said on either side after their first eager deliberation of their plan of inquiry. There was nothing could be said that would not end in Glencora, and both were too wise to give their fears substance by expressing them.

So they gravely settled the route they meant to take, trying hard to speak cheerfully; and then Alexander devoted himself to his mettlesome mare, the captain to his pipe, and his sharp scrutiny of each twilight shrouded figure they encountered.

Crossing Fountain Bridge, they drew up at a small house occupied by one of the bargemen, known to Captain Drummond. The captain sprang out and found the man, brought him to Alexander, and they each questioned him.

"Have you been on duty to-day?" inquired the captain.

The man shook his head, and explained that he had been on special duty the night before, and had required the day to rest, and that his son had taken his place.

"Ah! Then you've been asleep; you did not observe any of the boats which passed this evening?" broke in Alexander.

The bargeman further explained that ever since five o'clock he had been on the lookout for his son's return, loitering most of the time on the bridge.

"Then you'll be able to remember whether any lady like Miss Calvert passed you on either freight or passenger boat, or over the bridge, between a quarter past five and this time."

"Sorrow ae body, man, woman, or wean, hae I seen on the boats sin' the gloamin' forby thae Territorial school bairns comin home frae an excursion."

The gentlemen consulted in broken whispers, each face averted, till the captain broke out with, "Confound it, man,



she's either dead or alive; we must raise heaven and earth to find which!"

He walked up to the bargeman, and in a few words related the lady's disappearance, and enjoined him to watch the canal, up by the first lock, when the next boat came down to Edinburgh, and to look well to the water; and finally, with a husky throat and a glance of anguish at the stony face of the bridegroom, he said:

"I leave my orders with you, to dispatch some of the bargemen to—well, to drag the canal between this and Mr. Buccleugh's place, in the course of the night, unless I see you again, and countermand the orders. A tall girl, you know, a young thing, with black hair, and a gray cloak, and bonnet—was it Buccleugh? Yes, that's her description."

Without another word he sprang into the gig, and Alexander drove swiftly over Fountain Bridge, gazing with fascinated eye into the gurgling abyss as they recrossed it. They dashed over the resonant causeway first, to Portland street, to the railway station, where, after making fruitless inquiries, they left a description of the lost one with the station master, and then drove to the fashionable quarters of the city where Glencora was in the habit of visiting. Composing their demeanor to correspond with that of gentlemen at ease, on a careless matter of business, they paused before the tall mansion of one of her intimates, opposite the Queen's Crescent Gardens, and rang the bell. A groom answering the summons, Captain Drummond sent in his card and compliments to the lady of the house, declining to enter, and begging to know whether Miss Calvert was with her. The obsequious attendant faithfully delivering the message, the lady came cordially out herself, and, without circumlocution, told him that she had not seen either of the young ladies for some days.

"It is Miss Florice you inquire for?" said she, smiling at the captain's face of gloom, which the honest fellow forgot to compose.

"No, no; she's safe enough, Mrs. Gillespie, but Glencora"—he stopped to master his increasing agitation—"the fact is, she's too late in town, considering what she means to do to-morrow. Good-night, madam—good-night!" and he silently took his seat again, and Alexander lashed the mare into a frenzy of speed. This is but a sample of how



they fared in this branch of their search. They called on the girl's acquaintances, till it was too late to call without startling their friends.

Then, at twelve of the night, when the chimings of a dozen bells were multiplying—when Alexander's wedding-day had slipped into existence at last—then the guardian and the bridegroom sat in the gig before the huge building, hotly disputing.

"I tell you, Buccleugh, this won't do. It has gone beyond us, and we are only wasting time; we are justified in calling in proper aid. And who is better able to assist in our search than the director of the detective force?" cried the hot-headed sailor.

"No, no, Drummond, my friend, would you have my girl's name in the public mouth, when she may even now be safely asleep in her holy innocence, unconscious of the anxiety she has caused us? Have patience, sir, and see what we can do for ourselves, before we set the detectives on her track, as if she were a felon."

"Hold there!" ejaculated the captain; "not on *her* track, Heaven forbid! but on *theirs* who have murdered or stolen the lassie."

"Oh, think of it, Drummond—this day was to have made her my wife!" groaned Alexander, in the bitterness of his soul.

The captain's big heart swelled nearly to bursting, and he laid his friendly hand heavily on Alexander's shoulder to comfort him.

"Oh, Drummond! go—go do what you like—anything to recover her! Better that than further risk."

Captain Drummond descended once more, and entered the office of the chief of police. Before he faced the anguished man again, he had put the whole matter into the hands of that superior power—her name, her age, her appearance—all, as if she had been a straying apprentice, or the heroine of a clandestine elopement—she, the dainty lady of pure breeding. Captain Drummond's pride of exclusiveness, and his gentleman's care of all that fences woman from publicity, were thrown to the winds.

With stern faces the two men at length turned homeward, and as they passed Fountain Bridge, the captain did not stop to revoke his order.

At Lady-Bank the night had crawled on fearfully enough.



The girls never thought of retiring. Even Mrs. Ellathorne, methodical as she was, could not ignore the dread they all sighed under, though she still toiled with assiduity in the preparations for Glencora's wedding-day. She strove to keep her little bevy of white-faced myrmidons employed, too; but could not chide them, however often the work was dashed down, and the workers out at the door listening in the night to the grit of feet upon the gravel, the stifled voices on the canal-side.

Once more the servants had been sent out with lanterns to search the grounds, the high garden, behind every shrub or tree in the rustic arbor, where she might have fallen asleep or fainted; every bracken-bed in the whispering grove had been felt and turned over, and, most important of all, the bank of the canal, among the standing corn. They flung their jackets off, and one holding aloft the light, the other two crept along the water-mark, shaking the petal-like snow off the brambles, bending the evil hemlock-weed over its poisonous roots; feeling the grassy bank, all daisy-starred and dewy, with hands that trembled to clutch something of hers by which to trace her; scaring the water-mole from his hole in the mud, the frog from his slimy stone. They flung the rays of their lantern far across the canal, and up and down its darksome winding, and started at the ripple-ripple they heard, as the rats plunged in and cleft the sluggish waters for the opposite bank. And they muttered together, as, at last, they stood on the path, eying the canal:

“Was it a white gown she had on?”

“Na, na; it's no' her wears the white—it's Miss Florice. I canna mind what Jean said.”

“Jean said, a black silk gown wi' green ribbons, and weel she kens, for she dresses the young leddies.”

And at last they strode back to the house, peering through the white columns of the standing corn on their way. And the gardener's boy stooped down and put his hand into the kennel where Glencora's deerhound lay, and, as he felt its smooth coat and shivering sides, he raised a cry, and the other men came back with the light.

There crouched Ossian, licking his wet paws and heaving long sighs. Next minute they had him in the kitchen, and Mrs. Ellathorne called down. She came in haste, with her



maidens at her back; and the group of servants drew back, leaving the dog exposed in the midst.

Mrs. Ellathorne gazed at him in inquiring silence; but Florice cried out—ran forward to him, and, throwing herself on the stone flags, took him in her arms and kissed him, while he, whimperingly, tried to lick her face and hands.

“Oh, you poor old fellow!” sobbed Florice, hugging him. “Where have you been swimming? Oh, doggie! where’s Glencora? Why did you leave her? You are the only breathing creature who saw her go—you only know where she is!”

“Hush, my child!” breathed her guardian’s sister; “there’s One in heaven knows well where Glencora is, and will keep her safe enough, I’ll warrant. Is Ossian wet?”

The women gathered round Florice as she wept over her sister’s hound, and it needed little wit to discover his silver chain broken—his silver collar twisted at the throat, as if by a brutal hand—brown weed on his silver chain, and dust on his clotted ears. It was a dreadful discovery, and suggested the canal again; and, at Mrs. Ellathorne’s frantic commands, they were coaxing the hound to pick up the trail at the back door, when the captain and Alexander drove round the house and saw them.

The ladies huddled together in the door-way, the servants in the lobby asked no questions of them; their faces spoke of utter failure. Captain Drummond took a torch from a bystander, and, kneeling down, examined the weary Ossian, while Buccleugh stood by, with weary eyes fixed upon him; and presently the captain touched the still wet chain with his tongue, picked a brown fiber off the collar, and went into the house.

“Don’t bother the dog about the canal—he hasn’t been there,” cried he, over his shoulder, to the men. “Come here, Hester—come, Buccleugh—girls, where are you?”

He led the way to the deserted parlor.

“There’s been worse than an accident happened, I fear,” muttered he, closing the door. “That dog has been swimming for his life—not in the canal, but in the sea. The water on him is sea-brine, the weeds on him are sea-grass. He’s followed them a pretty distance before they threw him in the tide. Who saw this dog with—with her?”



"I saw him follow Malcolm when she carried out the cloak," whispered Florice, with white lips.

"I saw him with her when she came to us at the gate," faltered Alexander. "Glencora patted him when he leaped at her hands, and then Malcolm scolded him, and went back along the lane, dragging him by the chain.

"And where did she leave him?"

Nobody knew.

For the fourth time the lady's-maid was summoned.

No longer hot and angry, but pale as the palest there, she came.

"Why did you order the dog home when he followed you with the bonnet and cloak?" demanded the captain.

She seemed to shrink within herself under the steady scrutiny of his keen blue eyes.

"Because I thought the twa young leddies liked him chained to the kennel when they gayed amang their flowers," she replied, with an appealing glance at Florice.

"That's true, guardie," said Florice, reassuringly. "We have said so more than once."

"And then Ossie," resumed the girl, "barked at me and whined till I lat him rin, and he scoured awa to Miss Glencora."

"Not while she was with me, Malcolm," breathed through Alexander's cold lips.

She courtesied and maintained silence, until they told her to withdraw.

No, no, no, the clew was not to be in their hands yet.

As Alexander paced the apartment with contracted brows, his glance caught a bluish gleam from something on a chair by the window, and bending to look, he saw the casket he had brought for Glencora lying still open, the pearl bracelets shimmering with orient luster.

Standing with them in his shaking hand, his set face melted into tenderness, then blanched with direst misery; and for the first time his courage failed him, and he gave way.

Throwing himself on a chair, he buried his face in his hands, still clutching the bridal ornaments, and groaned aloud in an abandonment of grief. Florice's wistful eyes, which followed all his movements with yearning sympathy, filled with hot tears at this, and she went over and sat down beside him, leaning her little head against his arm, and



seeking, like some faithful dumb animal, to soothe him by her silent caressing. The other girls gave each other an expressive glance, and hurried from the room, to burst into hysterical grief when out of hearing.

"Oh, girls!" wailed Jessie, "if this goes on much longer he'll lose his reason. You don't know Alexander as I do. He just adored Glennie Calvert, though he is so strong in heart and mind. He's not easily moved, and the case must be terrible when even he at last is daunted."

"Restrain yourselves, Marian and Jessie," pleaded Madge Severn, crying harder than any of them. "We must not be useless in this woeful house. Let us see what we can do to lighten the burden."

"To see his proud head on the table, and his fingers clenched in his bonnie hair!" moaned Jessie again.

"And Florice, the poor young thing, not seventeen, trying to comfort him," responded Marian, her arms wrapped round the other two.

"Alas! alas! what a bridal!" exclaimed Madge, looking round the exquisitely arranged tables. "Let us bring in something to the captain and Mr. Buccleugh. Do you mind, girls, that neither have broken bread since luncheon? Haste! they're fainting with neglect, and not only with despair!"

She hastily arranged some refreshments on a server, and carried it in herself. Marian and Jessie quickly followed, with wine and cold fowl from the cook's pantry. They placed them on the table, and rested not till the captain had seated himself before the first mouthful he had tasted for many hours, poor fellow. And presently Alexander raised his face, pale and composed again, and looking at the gentle trio, smiled gratefully, and suffered himself to be placed at the tray.

They quietly listened to the captain's brief relation of the night's search, holding each a cold hand to Florice's, and, by their hopeful looks, striving to strengthen her; submitting cheerfully to Mrs. Ellathorne's next request, which was prompted by some whispered injunction from her brother, that they would retire to their rooms and take some rest.

Yet they gave way to blinding tears once more, as, wrapped in each other's arms, they knelt at a signal from Mrs. Ellathorne, and the captain, with reverential fervor,



offered a brief prayer for guidance in their sore affliction, and for grace to bear, if hope were vain.

Poor Alexander, who was not used to the captain's simple worship, being, as he once gayly told Glencora, a sort of heathen, in his ignorance of family routine, knelt humbly with the girls, and, pressing his hands hard on his brow, seemed to glean firmness from the high source invoked by his friends. Then the bride-maids went their way, and bolting doors and muffling windows sought to shut out the coarse voices and heavy steps of the bargemen with their drags.

The sweet dawn was creeping into Edinburgh over the crouching hills, and the western wind brought with it balmy scents of the golden gorse and sunny heather, when Alexander and Captain Drummond went down to the canal to their horrifying task.

A dreary dawning it was, indeed, to them, and their best cheer was the failure of every attempt to bring up the fair body of the lost lady. Still they toiled at their gloomy work, till the men on the early barges shouted for the way, and the stout boat-horses, trotting on the other side, trod down their ghastly implements—their ropes and hooks and stretcher—and with freer breathing they went back to slumbering Lady-Bank.

No rest for the two gentlemen, however, half-comforted by their ill success in the dragging of the canal; they both remembered how Ossian had proved to them the possibility of a still more startling discovery.

They resolved, after two hours' rest, which was insisted on by the prudent Mrs. Ellathorne, to return to the city and pursue their search with this new clew in their hands. So the luckless bridegroom threw himself upon a couch, in the house of his lost Glencora, and slumber, heavy and torpid, stole the hours of this, his wedding-day, so long anticipated—so ardently desired.

At nine o'clock a fresh horse from Alexander Buccleugh's stable was sent for, and the two gentlemen, equipped and impatient, entered the sunny parlor to see the ladies.

Poor things! Heavy-eyed and wan enough they looked after their night of tears and suspense. All the bright gleam was gone from Marian Gordon's glancing eyes; Madge wept and paled with every thought.

Jessie Buccleugh leaned her flaxen head against the



window-pane and looked at vacancy with her quiet, wistful eyes; and poor, stricken Florice had not appeared at all.

Mrs. Ellathorne, quiet, rigid, and alert, sat behind a small breakfast-table, ready to seize upon the gentlemen when they should appear.

And when they *did* enter, it was the signal for a general but stifled outburst from the bride-maids. Poor Madge dashed down the pen with which she was endeavoring to write many little notes to the wedding guests, whose presence was not now desired, and the envelopes which Marian was addressing became suddenly blistered with a shower of hot tears.

Yet they heroically commanded their own sorrow so much, and clustered round him with tender faces and murmured words of loving sympathy.

"Sit here, Alexander," said Jessie Buccleugh, coming from the window with her pale face, and leading him to a couch where the subdued light should not reveal the proud heart's anguish.

Then she brought him food and sat beside him, talking in her indistinct tones, which made him stoop his head involuntarily to hear, and he ate mechanically as he did so. As for poor, big-hearted Captain Drummond, he gulped his breakfast scalding hot, and glowered savagely into his cup, to prevent his swelling soul from bursting, whenever he looked at the quiet maidens in their sweet and gentle ministry.

"Where's Florice?" he blurted at last, as he fiercely tore on his gloves.

"She's in—she's in Glencora's dressing-room," answered Mrs. Ellathorne, with a tremulous voice. "She's moaning bitterly, poor child."

"Buccleugh, there's the gig—get in, and I'll be after you," said the captain, slouching his hat down over his brows.

He went up the flight of stairs, and they heard him knock at the dressing-room door. In two or three minutes he came down again and went straight out to the carriage. His face was purple as he got in beside Mr. Buccleugh, and his voice quite indistinct as he lifted Ossian after him into the gig, and held him between his knees.

"We sha'n't be back, Hester, before night," said the captain, as they drove off; "good-by."



They drove and they walked; they retraced and twisted: they covered poor Ossian's head until he nearly bit; and they muddled poor Ossian's brains until Ossian did not know who he was, why he was, or where he was. Then they drove the three miles down to Portobello, and set him on the sands, and retired, after throwing him one of Glencora's little gloves for company.

Ossian looked about, ran hither and thither, shook himself, and capered; then discovered that he was alone, howled dismally, returned to the glove, fondled it, picked it up, and finally started off at a quick gallop along the road for Edinburgh.

Hopefully the two watchers turned their horses' heads and sped after him. But, after dashing at a break-neck pace by the shortest possible cut, they discovered he was only leading them home; so they called him back, captured him—not much to his liking this time—and trotted off to Granton Pier.

“Perhaps some steamer lying there may have—— Buccleugh, this is the morning that one of the New York steamships leave. If there was an elopement, or anything of that kind——”

The captain stopped with a jerk, for Alexander's hand fell like a vise upon his arm, and his face was blanched with a blaze of passion, which flashed from his eyes, and left his cheeks at white heat.

“Drummond, never *whisper* the like again!” he ejaculated, sternly. “My love was pure, and true, and constant. I could trust Glencora with my honor, and *her life* will go before it is betrayed. If we are going to Granton Pier to look for the proofs of an elopement, we go not there.”

A gleam of actual pleasure illuminated the honest captain's eyes at the fiery outburst. He silently squeezed his friend's hand with an iron grip, and did not even ejaculate a word, when Buccleugh impetuously wheeled round his horse, and sped down the street again.

“I'll tell you what,” said Alexander, in a few minutes, in his usual calm tones, “I have just been thinking—would it not be possible that she went down to meet you on Long Pier, on your arrival from Dysart, and, perhaps, missing you, as Malcolm said, have gone over in the next boat, hoping to see you there? Or, stay—may she not have gone,



for some reason, to see her friend, Lina Craig, who, you know, is dangerously ill?"

"Perhaps, perhaps," said the captain, dubiously. "We can try Ossian."

They trotted gingerly out to the very end of Long Pier, and once more liberated the dog; and now, indeed, his movements invited speculation.

At first he erected himself, and looked around; then, with a sudden wild skurrying to and fro, he picked up some trail—a very short one, it seemed, for he ran round and round, never diverging into a wider circle, but always stepping close to the edge of the pier and looking down into the surging water. And while poor Buccleugh and Drummond shudderingly approached, he began to whimper and tremble, and at last he lifted his head and gazed out upon the sea, with a long, melancholy howl.

"Oh, what—what does this mean?" cried Alexander, with wild agitation. "Oh, for a witness—one witness beside this dumb hound!"

"All this may be proving the truth of your suggestion about Dysart," said Drummond, more calmly. "Let us give some directions, and ask some questions here, and go over in the next boat."

Which was done. The drags were brought, and the customary crowd gathered to enjoy a spectacle. All the questioning was fruitless, and Captain Drummond and Alexander Buccleugh escaped to the bonnie shores of Fife, leaving Edinburgh and its horrors behind them; and meeting—as doggie well knew, with his drooping head and dragging, reluctant steps—only utter disappointment in their visit to Lina Craig.

Why track them in all their vain plans, and their disappointments, through the long, wretched wedding-day?

They returned from Dysart and Kirkaldy, and met no livid corpse on the Long Pier, as they feared, and drove to Leith and back again, and paid a visit to the Chief Director of Police, who managed to comfort them a little by his prophecy of his myrmidons' ultimate success, and read the catalogue of all the passenger ships outward bound, and the railway lists, and the lists of English, French, Irish, Continental, American, Canadian, and Nova Scotian ships, steamboats, and transports. And then the sun was low, and their horses were exhausted, and their own dauntless spirits



almost conquered; so Mr. Spires, the Chief of Police, told them to go home, and he would do the rest.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### THE LADY OF STRATHMORE.

Precisely ten days prior to the opening of this chronicle, two young men were pacing back and forth in front of a small inn, in a quiet, antiquated town in Elgin. Blithe, light-hearted young fellows enough they were, with their deer hounds hanging of their heads and stretching of their streaming tongues while they stalked behind their masters, whose careless negligence and general air of good nature contrasted pleasantly with the stolid faces of the Elgin ladies who stared at them. It was easy to see that those young gentlemen were travelers, summer tourists, who probably had never before been beyond the Grampian hills, who were exploring the savage region of the North partly for amusement, partly to obtain one long, ecstatic "breather" among the grand highland mountains and peat moors. Apparently they had achieved their object, for their good-looking faces were embrowned, their luxuriant beards seemed to have weathered many a harsh blast among the heather, their light gray traveling suits had lost much of the pristine freshness that had graced them perhaps four weeks ago, and the rifles, shot-pouches, fishing-tackle, etc., thrown in the stable yard, had a well-worn look, as if hard usage, and much of it, had been their lot.

"Well, Phil, I'm no philosopher," cried the younger man of the two, shaking his leg energetically with his cane as he walked, "and I'm no Don Quixote, but, honestly and verily, a highland life is the life for me. I declare I would scarcely care if I never saw Auld Reekie again."

"No philosopher? Ha! ha! ha! You don't need to remind me of that, Moray. I never accused you of aping Diogenes. But, do you actually assert that already Edinburgh has lost *all* its interest for you?" asked the elder gentleman, with a quizzical glance at the bright, careless face of his comrade.

"Humph! no," admitted Moray, with a bothered look.



“Of course I’m still clannish enough, spite of all my paroxysms of admiration over these glorious Northern hills, to prefer my own town to any of them. ‘There is nae hoose like my ain hoose,’ well, I wot. But then, you see, Phil, I haven’t had your advantages. I’ve always been the scape-grace and ne’er-do-weel of our family, ranging about from country to country, with no settled preference for thing, place, or body; while you, my steady elder brother, have staid quietly at home in Auld Reekie, have married your bonnie Lammermoor lassie, have taken the goods the gods provided, and are happy. Phil, you are a good fellow, and have been more than a brother to me; and in memory of the legion of scrapes you have in times past rescued me from, I’ll stick to you like a burr awhile yet.”

The other laughed cheerily.

“Bide a wee, Moray, my boy!” cried he. “Stop till you meet some other bonnie Lammermoor lassie, whose modest grace shall achieve what I never can achieve, the task of inducing my wild brother to settle down on his money, in the other half of Phil Hazeldean’s double house; and then, a fig for ancient Europe, highland hills, or everlasting ocean! You’ll narrow your life, too, stare no longer at a blinding mirage that’s lifted in air, but keep glad eyes on a heaven by your own fireside; and then you, too, will be happy.”

Moray did not immediately answer; he pulled round one of the great hounds, and twisted his ears, with a very gloomy face.

“I believe you’re right, Phil,” said he, at last; “and I suppose I could profit by your advice, if I did not just meet *her* again as soon as I go back to Edinburgh. She’ll drive out of my head all the Leamies and Jessies I’ve seen among the highland heather, just as she drove out of my poor, stupid pate all the Italian signorinas, the German fraulinas, and the French demoiselles last winter. Heighho! I wish I were married—and I’ll try!”

And Moray Hazeldean lifted his shepherd tartan cap to toss back his nut-brown locks.

“Bravo, my lad!” cried Phil’s breezy voice, as he dealt him a hearty slap on the back. “We’ll see you yet——”

The rest was lost in a sudden and tumultuous baying of the hounds, as a traveling carriage rattled through the narrow, irregular street, and drew up close beside them.

Foam-flecked were the two handsome horses, and dimmed



was the polish of the carriage panels; the fierce armorial bearings were nearly obliterated beneath a layer of thick red dust, that was powdered over every part of the sumptuous equipage during a long and rapid drive on the post-roads. The coachman descended from his box and opened the carriage door, and two persons emerged from its depths; the first, a tall, stately old man; the second, a radiant young lady, who accepted the proffered arm of her companion with a certain air of grand triumph, and whose glowing face turned on the young tourists with the air of a duchess, ere she vanished in the quaint little inn.

"Come from Kieth, my man?" inquired Philip Hazeldean, lighting his cigar in the shelter behind the carriage.

"Na, na, sir," grumbled the old coachman; "we've ridden a' the way frae Aberdeen, an' wow, but it's a weary fir'gate!"

Moray now came from his scrutiny of the arms on the panel, and joined his brother.

"Some Highland chief, or laird, I think," he whispered; "I can't make out more on the panel than something like a griffin with a chain in his mouth, and a horrible Gaelic inscription. Who are they?"

"My dear brother, I don't know or care. It's half-past four, and I want my dinner. Let's go in and remind mine host. Age before honesty won't do this time; we came first; and intend to be served first."

"She's pretty, isn't she, Phil? What a tall, striking figure!"

"Pshaw! a supercilious face it had, as if it was saying, 'Do you observe my grandeur?'"

"Well, perhaps—but I like *hauteur*, and she's evidently noble. I wish I knew her name."

Philip whistled "Jock o' Hazeldean," his favorite tune, and looked down the odd little street of quaint Forres, with its lovely wild scenery around.

"Did you ever see such an old woman?" he exclaimed presently, as a figure, bent almost double, and leaning on a stout staff, approached slowly, gazing at the carriage with eyes strangely black and brilliant. She came nearer, stopped beside the carriage, dropped on her knees, and kissed the dusty panel whereon was blazoned the armorial design; then crept down the street again, murmuring in unintelligible Gaelic. The two loungers watched her as she



slowly retraced her steps to a small cottage where a Forres wife was spinning by the open door.

"By Jove!" ejaculated Moray, with enthusiasm, "this Highland loyalty and simple worship is as strong in this nineteenth century as in the days of Bruce and Wallace. I suppose that old woman——"

"Never mind, Moray, I'm going in. The coach comes along at six o'clock, and my appetite is at least an hour strong."

"Faith! so is mine," rejoined Moray. So they tossed away their cigars, and turned into the "Forres Stag Inn."

To their surprise they found the illustrious lady traveler sitting alone by the window, and regarding the carriage, to which fresh horses from the "Forres Stag Inn" stables were being attached. Her brown traveling robes had not been removed, and her little straw bonnet and long veil were lying on a chair near her. There was the same radiant triumph, ill-repressed, in her fine face which they had before remarked, and she turned quickly as the door opened, with a joyous smile, which, however, faded when her glance encountered strangers.

"Oh, I beg pardon, madam," said Philip Hazeldean, essaying to withdraw; "we were not told that this room was occupied. Excuse the intrusion."

"No, don't go away, sir," replied she, with dignified politeness. "I have no doubt you had engaged the room before I arrived; don't make me aware of my intrusion by leaving me to enjoy the wretched little place alone."

She glanced around the dwarfed walls and dingy chintz curtains with a little shrug of contempt, and looked out again at her well-appointed carriage.

With thanks the Edinburgh gentleman accepted her civility. Philip picked up a book from the table, and, yawning, turned the leaves. Moray took a chair not far from the young aristocrat, and entered into conversation with her.

"It is not often one looks on a more enchanting scene," murmured Moray, following her glance out of the narrow window.

She lifted her eyes from her carriage and rested them a moment on the distant hills, then they wandered over the yellow corn-fields, the whin bushes shaking their golden bloom, the funereal fir, and the stout larch thickets,



and lastly on the hale bronzed face of the tourist at her side.

"Beautiful!" said she, with shining eyes. "Yet my domain, they tell me, is richer far. You love enchanting scenes, then?"

"I have hitherto paid the devotion of a life-time to them," returned Moray, "but seldom have I enjoyed their beauty with such sweet concomitants," with great gallantry.

She did not notice his gallantry, did not answer his enthusiasm, her dark face was radiant in its absorbed exultation.

"If you stay any time in Forres," resumed Moray, determined to make her speak to him, "you should visit the obelisk erected near here, 'King Swino's Stone,' some say representing the murder of Macduff. You remember, perhaps, how Shakespeare has celebrated that hill over there—the Knock of Alves in 'Macbeth,' where the weird sisters prophesied his future greatness.

" 'How far is it called to Forres? What are these,  
So withered and so wild in their attire,  
That look not like the inhabitants of earth,  
And yet are on it!'

"You have heard the lines? If you had been at that window an hour ago, you would have been forcibly reminded of them; for I saw a woman, so old that she scarce could walk, creep up to your carriage, kneel, and kiss with fierce devotion the arms on the panel."

The lady started, and looked curiously down the street; her interest was at last aroused.

"An old woman, sir? I am surprised. This Forres does not belong to the lands of Strathmore. I know of none of my people here."

Moray crimsoned. He felt his presumption in so persistently addressing a lady whose high rank was, at last, avowed,

"Pardon me," murmured he, confused. "I had no idea that you were a scion of that noble house. I confess my presumption in addressing you so freely."

"Pshaw! nonsense!" cried she, laughing, and drawing her pretty form to its height. "I neither meant to preserve an *incognito*, nor to avow my station; still, as you are so good as to try to amuse a stranger's passing hour of *ennui*,



you deserve a fuller knowledge of your *protegee* (though I must confess I trespass on my uncle's command in speaking to strangers.) Therefore behold before you Kilmeny Strathmore, Lady of Strathmore, who, having just obtained the title through a succession of curious circumstances, is now on her way to the Highland estate, to take possession of the fairest domain in broad Scotland."

With a blush, and a bow, and a bland pride, Lady Strathmore extended her hand to Moray Hazeldean, who gravely pressed it in his, and gravely gave his own name in return.

"Then you have never seen your inheritance as yet!" asked he, his eyes opened to her no longer mysterious exultation.

"Not yet, Mr. Hazeldean; nor did I expect to see it, had not my cousin——"

She paused, bit her lip, and changed the subject.

"I am not accustomed to being treated as of much importance," she said, artlessly. "I have moved, hitherto, in a very moderate sphere, and my exaltation is delightful to me; it satisfies a fierce ambition I have always been a victim of; it lifts me beyond old, petty trials, paltry pleasures, and—humble loves."

Again she paused, a hard, relentless expression crossed her face with sinister force, the ungloved fingers in her lap closed tightly on each other.

Moray silently regarded her; truth to say, he began not to admire Lady Kilmeny, of Strathmore, so much.

Here Philip, who had for some time been looking at her over the top of his book, remarked, respectfully:

"No doubt your elevation will have left some mourners in your old station, my lady. How did your family like losing you?"

She frowned. At first she did not seem inclined to answer; then, changing her mind, looked around at him serenely:

"Oh, there was no one could truly claim me or my duty, but an aged grandfather and half-deaf grandmother. I had always lived with them in Aberdeen, my birthplace, since my father died, many years ago. They are my mother's parents, not my father's. He was a colonel, and next of kin to William, Lord of Strathmore, whose title I now bear. The uncle now conveying me to Strathmore is the youngest brother of the three, and heir after me, if I



do not—well, if I don't marry. Of course, my old connections rejoiced with me in my good fortune; at all events, whether they did or not, I have raised myself immeasurably above their approbation or dissent, by deserting them."

As she uttered these unlovely sentiments, her mellow voice rang sweet and clear, and her selfish soul looked out arrogantly from her fine eyes.

This time neither of the gentlemen sought to break in on her reflections, till she flashed an impatient glance from the window, murmuring:

"What *can* have detained my uncle? We are to travel to Nairn to-night, and it is high time we had started. Dear me!" she cried, suddenly gazing down the street with great interest. "Is that where my Uncle Tyndale went to?"

Moray glanced out.

The old man was emerging from the little stone cottage wherein the aged devotee of his house had disappeared an hour and a half before.

Lady Strathmore eyed his approach, as, with slow steps, and eyes on the ground, he neared the inn. She half rose, her breath came sharply, her countenance became watchfully alert.

Tyndale Strathmore gave some imperious orders to the groom, who was harnessing fresh horses. Tyndale Strathmore strode into the "Forres Stag," and opened the saloon door. His face was pale, his gray brows contracted, his lips compressed. They looked at each other, the uncle and niece. He faltered as he saw strangers.

"Come here, I want you," quoth he, quietly.

He held the door open for her to pass through, took her hand, and led her to a private room.

It might have been twenty minutes subsequently that Lady Kilmeny Strathmore came out from her uncle, and stood in the inn door-way, leaning against the lintel. She gazed blankly down the street, and at the winding Findhorn. Her eyes, large, black, and fathomless with some fearful shock; her countenance chalked with drear dismay, and the exulting blush forever faded from her bloodless lips.

The Hazeldeans were out in the yard collecting their hunting apparatus, and hiring a bare-legged boy with valises, etc., to convey to the Royal Hotel up the street,



where the huge yellow [stage-coach for Keith was now standing.

Moray heard a sigh, and looking up at her, saw her face, and dropped his rifle in the straw of the stable-yard.

“Heavens!” ejaculated Moray, in horror, “what’s the matter with my lady?”

Tyndale Strathmore came out, and laid his hand on her shoulder pityingly, soothingly. “Come in, Kilmeny,” he urged, gently. “You are too spirited a girl to sink under this. Come, we will rest here to-night; we won’t start till to-morrow morning.”

Then she turned a blazing, passionate gaze full on his disturbed face, and then she looked at the roseate clouds and the beautiful earth, and at last her dry eyes met those of Moray Hazeldean fixed with mournful interest upon her, ere he should turn away to follow his brother, stepping fast down the street.

And she laughed a little dreary laugh, and kissing her white hand mockingly, cried, with bitterness:

“Farewell, my friend of short duration! Look your last on Kilmeny, Lady of Strathmore!”

And so she vanished with her uncle.

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## CHAPTER V.

### THE HOLLY-SPRAY.

So the wedding-day was past, and the feast was untouched, the guests unwelcomed, the ring unclaimed, the bride—ah, where?

Now dull, relentless time stretched beyond—no golden circlet binding it in from outer gloom—no sweet and perfected love to gild its drear clouds. It might have been his honeymoon; but, hush! such hopes of bliss are not for him, and the haggard face of the bridegroom is stern with other thoughts than those of happy wedlock. These creeping days must tell of tireless search, of keenest vigilance; this awful season, for which he has daily sighed for twelve months, has brought him the blackest affliction of his life—the awful ordeal of “hope deferred.” And yet right bravely Alexander Buccleugh held his own of sanguine hope and noble perseverance; nothing seemed to soil the purity of his



faith in hapless Glencora, and through the most appalling disclosures, he still pursued, with iron resolve, his way to the end.

The day after their search through Edinburgh, a messenger came to Denburn at an early hour, requiring the presence of the fatigued Buccleugh at Lady-Bank, to meet some gentlemen from town.

Well he knew their errand—they were detectives arrived with their report.

What were Alexander's thoughts as he walked through the dewy ferns of the "private path" that sunny morning! His face was quiet, his lips were set in sorrowful anguish, as he paused a moment at the wicket-gate and looked up and down the fairy greenway; then he looked up through the trees to the cheerful sky, and the mute appeal touched the heart of the servant-maid as she walked behind, and she heavily sighed as she paced the shaded footpath. When Alexander and Jean Malcolm arrived at Lady-Bank, she at once conducted him through the spacious lower passage to a pair of green-baize folding-doors, half-way through the hall. These she opened, and he beheld a narrow, private passage leading off the main part of the house, which, when traversed, he found himself at the door of the library. Ushering him in, Malcolm withdrew.

There were several persons assembled to wait for Alexander. There, at the table, tallest of the group, stood Lord Kilcourcy, a thin, wiry old man, with a long upper-lip, mouth drooping at the corners, and crow's-feet, of habitual smiles circling a pair of good-humored eyes; his nephew, heir and favorite, Harold Russel, of a strikingly agreeable person, charming manners, and good heart. He was a very close friend of Alexander's, and was to have been his first groomsman.

Russel was a writer for the *Signet*, and was unengaged in affections, as many a belle in the new town pensively remembered. Then there were Mr. Spires, the Chief of Police, and a wiry little man whom he introduced as Mr. Curtiss, detective officer. Captain Drummond stood at the table with a map of Edinburgh spread out, which he was tracing with his forefinger, while Mr. Curtiss nodded and took snuff.

Mrs. Ellathorne sat at a window, apart, listening, with anxious face.



When Alexander turned from greeting the unhappy lady, Lord Kilcourcy grasped his hand and wrung it sympathetically.

“Good-morning to you, Buccleugh. I had not thought to find you in such a plight to-day. This is a curious accident, eh?” said he, bluntly.

“I’ll take care, my lord, that those concerned in it will rue ‘the accident,’” returned Alexander, quietly.

The captain pressed his hand and hastily turned away his face, and then Harold Russel drew him round to his side of the table, and, linking his arm in his, and without more ado, plunged into business.

“Now that Mr. Buccleugh has arrived, I will give our report of yesterday’s proceedings,” began Mr. Spires, *fixing on Alexander a pair of inquisitive gray eyes*, whose attention never swerved from his face during the whole of the succeeding consultation. “I must tell you beforehand, however, that we have made no important discovery as yet, unless the two suspicious cases I am about to mention may be considered worth pursuing. Acting on a hint from Captain Drummond, I sent to the residence of Lord Kilcourcy, and a few inquiries elicited some unknown facts. In the first place, my lord related his meetings with you on Tuesday evening at this Lady-Bank gate as you returned from your bank, just as you had previously related it, which proves the accuracy of your representation. In the second place, Lord Kilcourcy and his nephew did not meet Captain Drummond’s gardener wheeling a barrowful of flower pots from the horticultural gardens, which proves that your suggestion that my lord and Mr. Russel were the two gentlemen in the close carriage whom he *did* meet, is not as correct as your former asseveration. In the third place, my lord and Mr. Russel did not turn their carriage in Gower Lane by the grove, which proves that some other carriage did do so. In the fourth place, Mr. Russel can prove that another close carriage actually did come down the lane, perhaps a quarter of an hour before they passed Lady-Bank gate, the second time returning from their drive to the town, for, as they did so, Mr. Russel being on the seat beside the driver, from choice, looked up the avenue, and saw the old gardener staggering under a mighty flower pot which he was carrying across the lawn, having evidently just arrived. Now, as the gardener describes that carriage which he had met,



probably at half-past five, it was driven by a staid, gentlemanly person, looking more like a groom out of place, than by any means a cabman, that he is sure of; and the only inmate of the carriage he saw was an old gentleman, with what he calls 'a nose like a hawk's beak,' sitting with his back to the horses, and his eyes fixed on the road, which leads to the suspicion that some one else occupied the back seat, most probably a lady.

"Thus, as the case stands, the close carriage is the only object of suspicion we have yet come across; but now a question arises, when did it drive from town, so as to avoid three chances of being seen. First, by Mr. Buccleugh walking out to the Lady-Bank gate; second, by my lord, who overtook him there; and third, by the gardener toiling painfully and slowly through Gower Lane for at least an hour? That question we cannot answer; if the carriage turned on its tracks at the wicket-gate where Mr. Buccleugh left the lady we are in search of, it must have staid in some mysterious concealment while my lord's carriage passed the first time. The only possible place of concealment is the old Manor house between Lady-Bank and the city, which is at present untenanted. My men investigated the place, but the huge iron-studded gate was locked, and when they forced an entrance, the walks were overgrown with turf, and a shower having fallen through the night, every track might easily have been obliterated. A carriage *might* have stopped there on Tuesday afternoon, but we have no proof.

"Acting on the data I have described to you, I sent my men to the various stables in the city in search of the cab which was hired without a driver. Out of some fifty promising cases I select the two following for the present: At about four o'clock on Tuesday afternoon, two young gentlemen came to Buckle's cab establishment, and the younger of the two hired a handsome close cab, without a driver, saying they would drive themselves. The elder gentleman seemed much disturbed, and repeatedly dissuaded his companion from starting on the intended drive at all, calling it by some such name as 'a piece of folly—an unworthy undertaking.' The younger man seemed irritated, and presently said, vehemently:

"'I tell you she fears—has cause to fear him. I must and will save her. She has put her fate in my hands.



Don't dictate to me, man! I must not forsake her with this letter in my hands. Why, by Jove! I'd carry her off to-night, if I could!"

"Something to this effect the young man said, and then the other coldly refused to go with him. He said he 'would not interfere between the two, who were as good as man and wife already, however bad he was, however good she was.' And at last the other sprang on to the box himself, and, without another glance at him, drove off. The elder gentleman shortly after took leave, paying the hostler, however, for two hours' hire of the horse. A few minutes before six he came back again, asking whether his brother had returned, and, hearing he had not, announced his intention of waiting there to see him when he did. At half-past six the young man appeared, driving furiously. He sprang from the cab, and when he saw his brother, came to him, with a very pale face. 'She's gone, Heaven help me!' he said, in the greatest agitation. He was very incoherent. The astonished stabler who took the cab could not make much out of his words, he was in such a state. The brother tried to calm him down as they walked away arm in arm. The impression on the man's mind at the time was, that the young fellow was deceiving his prudent brother, and that he had run off with, or intended to run off with, the young lady. He thinks so because the brother said, sharply, 'Why not let the matter rest, then, if it is as you say? Why should you go away?' They left the stables in eager dispute; and the man is assured that he could identify either of them if he ever saw them again.

"The other case I selected is not so significant; in fact, there is nothing promising in it, except that the driver is not able to tell a straight story about it. At one o'clock in the afternoon of Tuesday last, an old gentleman appeared at McJennet's livery-stable, and ordered a carriage for the afternoon. He was evidently a stranger, for he spoke with a strong Aberdeensian accent, and looked about him a great deal. He obtained a dark-green close carriage, lined with chocolate-colored cloth, and a pair of large chestnut mares, which description tallies pretty well with the gardener's careless one. A man from McJennet's drove him, and this man returned with the cab at seven o'clock, very drunk indeed, and particularly jubilant over some unknown piece of luck, which he wasn't too drunk to keep a secret. His ac-



count of the day is, that the old gentleman drove straight to a poor quarter of the city, and, stopping at a tenement-house, went in, and in half an hour came out again with a sickly, sorrowful-looking young woman, evidently his daughter, and placed her in the carriage. They then drove out of the city on various country roads, aimlessly, the old man leaving it to the cabman to fill up the afternoon driving wherever he pleased. At last they returned to the young woman's residence, in Earl Grey street; there they got out, and the cabman waited around for another fare. He insists that the gentleman gave him half a crown to drink his daughter's health, and that he did so, and got drunk. Unknown to him, I sent to the house he described. The young lady turns out to be a Mrs. Cargill, an unfortunate creature, who is in trouble, and whose kind old father, a Mr. Forsyth, hosier, No. — Union street, came from Aberdeen to succor her. She says that her father dismissed the carriage at four o'clock, and he came back at seven. So three hours are to be accounted for, and that cabman won't account for them. He denies having obtained any other passenger, and is sulky on the subject. One thing more: as a brother hostler of McJennet's yard chaffing with the tipsy groom, he opened the carriage door and looked in. He saw nothing but a spray of leaves lying on the back seat, which at first he took to be a valuable plant, but which, when he picked it up, proved to be only a twig with a few leaves of holly. So our best——"

Mr. Spires stopped abruptly, smitten to a silence by a sudden gesture of Alexander Buccleugh's, gaping in amaze at the livid countenance of the unhappy young man.

"Stop there," said Alexander, hoarsely. "You have found the clew."

"The holly spray, eh?" muttered Mr. Spires, watching him with pursed lips.

"That man knows what became of Glencora," cried Alexander, fiercely. "Hunt him down till he confesses all. That holly spray proves that he knows. I placed it in her hair on Tuesday evening."

"Who saw you place it in her hair?" asked Mr. Spires, slowly.

He did not intend the imputation of mistrust conveyed in this cross-examination; it was his business to cross-question everybody.



"I beg Mr. Spires' pardon," here interposed Mrs. Ellathorne, earnestly, "but Alexander's word may and must be trusted in everthing. The girls saw him, as they looked from the parlor window, pluck a branch from the hedge by the gate, and fasten it in the back of her head."

Mr. Spires bowed, and looked at Alexander with a half smile.

"How did you part from Miss Calvert?" demanded he, suddenly.

"Where, do you mean? Oh, by the wicket; she came home by the private path (he described minutely), I by the canal."

Mr. Spires turned sharply on his subordinate.

"Notes, Mr. Curtiss," said he, shortly.

In a second the detective had out his little note-book, jotting away like a reporter.

"Who saw you come back to Lady-Bank house, by the canal?" asked Mr. Spires.

Alexander frankly admitted that no one happened to meet him, to his knowledge.

"Did you part with the lady on good terms, Mr. Buccleugh?" pursued Mr. Spires.

A positive smile, transitory as the ripple on the wave, yet almost scornful, trembled on Alexander's lip ere he answered, patiently:

"Oh, yes, indeed, we were what you call on good terms; but we made no parting of it; we were to meet again in five minutes."

"You were contracted in marriage to the lady?" said Mr. Spires.

Alexander did not trust himself to speak; he bowed his head, and leant heavily on the arm of his friend Russel.

"Humph—yes," Mr. Spires deliberated, his hands clasped behind him, while Mr. Curtiss wrote in cramped short-hand. Presently Mr. Spires wheeled on the captain. "Do you know, or most remotely suspect, that any one would have reason to wish this lady removed; that any person cherished revenge against her, or that any person would be benefited by her *death*?"

He sank his voice to utter the last dreary word, but his eyes were on Alexander as he audibly breathed it.

Mrs. Ellathorne hearing, clasped her hands convulsively in her lap, and threw a glance of anguish at Alexander.



So they both saw the gleam of absolute wrath that shot from his blue eyes, and the ungovernable spasm of terror that tortured his damp brows, and well were all such crumbs of observation sifted afterward.

The captain revolved the significant idea in his brain, but came to no conclusion, save the decided opinion that he knew of no one who did not love Glennie Calvert, who ever knew her.

“Mr. Spires,” uttered Alexander’s trembling voice, “never moot such a thing again. What should *we* know of diabolical plotting against the pure life of such as she? Who could ask such a question that knew her as we did? Her whole sweet life was open as the day; neither plot nor mystery lurked beneath her lovely seeming. Ask the captain; ask Mrs. Ellathorne, who nursed her when a baby; go to her little sister, Florice, who knew the very thoughts of her bosom. Why should man or devil conspire against Glencora?”

“And there was no——” Mr. Spires hesitated before the broad, manly gaze of the haughty Buccleugh, and bending to the captain, whispered to him, “There was no previous attachment that you were aware of?”

Quickly came the captain’s answer, aloud:

“No, Mr. Spires; Glencora never loved but once, and that was the man she should have married yesterday.”

Mr. Spires threw off his judicial ponderousness, tucked his gold snuff-box into his vest-pocket, and, pulling on his left-hand glove, turned to the captain, demanding, briskly:

“Gentlemen, do you put the case in my hands?”

“Unreservedly, Mr. Spires. Only weigh anchor as soon as you can,” cried the captain, eagerly.

Alexander quickly interposed, however:

“Perhaps you may have a surer chance of success if one of us, who know the circumstances so minutely, should personally aid you, and be kept carefully informed of every fresh disclosure. In fact, I wish to beg you to accept me as a colleague in the work. I shall know her under any circumstances, however unexpected; in any disguise they may force her to assume, however obscure; whereas your cleverest officers might pass her daily, face to face, and be none the wiser.”

Mr. Spires nodded two or three times, and as he cogitated, his half-smile was not pleasant to see.



“Very good, Mr. Buccleugh—*very* good! You shall be the companion of Mr. Curtiss. But, mind, you’ll have yourself to thank if you are led to any disagreeable discovery in the course of the investigations, which, I promise you, will be keen as the winter wind. I warn you, there may be strange people implicated.”

“You would spare my feelings from rude shocks, would you?” said Alexander, scornfully. “Truly, I have no feelings alive but the hope of winning her from her abductors, or, if that hope is in vain, the thirst for vengeance. Now, let us arrange our plans. It is time that the first link of this subtle chain was in our hands.”

With a last admiring survey of Alexander, Mr. Spires nipped the note-book out of Mr. Curtiss’ fingers, ran his eyes over the cabalistic signs therein, added a note or two himself, and then, resting his finger tops lightly on his subordinate’s little shoulder, said, importantly:

“Very well, Mr. Buccleugh, we are agreed. Now this is your man for patient and thorough search; his sagacity will scent a trail when every one else despairs. Well, sir, your first move is to go straight to McJennet’s yard, and see what you can make of that cabman; make it worth his while, and he will divulge everything. If you are successful in discovering anything of advantage, send a hint to me, and at once proceed to business. I shall contrive to obtain the address of the two young bloods who differed over the unknown lady before night, and then I advise you, Captain Drummond, to go personally to them, and obtain all the information they are willing to give. And now, good-morning, Curtiss. There’s your colleague; do your best.”

Mr. Spires gave him a gentle shove that sent him to Alexander’s elbow, where he stood, patient and alert, biding the time for his genius to win him laurels. Then the director of the detective force showed him out of the library.

Mrs. Ellathorne instantly seized Alexander and Mr. Curtiss, and conducting them into the pretty breakfast-room, where Florice, pallid and heavy-eyed, drooped behind the daintily laid tray, set them down to eat, with strict orders to Alexander to make no pretense of doing so.

Plunged in perplexed abstraction, after the first mutual glance of sympathy and low-spoken greetings, Alexander forgot Florice and all beside in his reflections; but, ah, how



dreary such silence was to her! How she longed to ask but one question! Little information could she gleam from the face of the sharp-eyed little cormorant at her left hand, with visage of wary self-repression, and Alexander's contracted brows and attitude of anxious thought only deepened her apprehension. Her heavy sigh reached his ear, and, looking up, he met her look of pain and terror.

"Have you discovered nothing?" faltered she, tremblingly.

Then he did his best, and clearing his brow of its gloom as best he might, told her the hopeful side of the case; and she caught sweet assurance from his words, and lifted up her head, and was comforted.

Mrs. Ellathorne had sent a servant to Denburn for Alexander's horse and gig, and leaving Mr. Curtiss modestly enjoying his coffee, and basking in the timid kindness which Florice heaped upon the man whom her sanguine little soul assured her was to bring her back her darling and pride, Alexander hastened to the parlor to consult with the captain before he set out with the detective.

He found the girls there, clustered around Lord Kilcourcy, who, with characteristic good humor, was laboriously narrating, to ease their curiosity, all he could remember of Mr. Spire's communication.

Harold Russel, leaning against the black marble mantelpiece, watched each girlish face, in its soft wistfulness, or vivid interest, but did not disturb the narrative. Sooth to say, Mr. Russel's tongue, though bold and authoritative enough in the court, was wont to be mute when the court was ruled by women.

As Alexander stood with the captain in the window, Jessie Buccleugh detached herself from her companions and tripped across the room to him.

"Here you are, dear old cousin—poor Alexander!" murmured she, feelingly. "Ah, me! that I could be of use to you!"

As she threw back her head to look up at him from her tiny stature, Harold Russel, by the mantel, thrilled in secret admiration at the tender meaning of her face. Never had woman seemed so fair in his eyes as she, in her artless pity.

"Dear little girlie!" answered Alexander, looking fondly at her, "you are of use to me, and when all this black



season is past forever, and we are happy in the sunshine again, then, my bonnie wee Jessie, you shall see how I shall reward you for your loving sympathy in these evil days. And now, captain, I'll go. There's Houri prancing up the avenue. Give me your blessing, little cousin, and then go to Florice. Poor child! she needs a sister!"

She hung on his arm, looking up with swimming eyes.

"I'm going to try to be a sister to Florice," said she, softly. "I couldn't leave her, or you, in such distress. I wrote to mamma that I wasn't going back to Ayr till—till Glennie came back to you. Madgie and Marian are going away to-day, and poor Florice is sick crying over them. But am I keeping you? Is that the gentleman who is going with you?"

Mr. Curtiss was standing in the hall, his keen eye taking in the little tableau in the sunny parlor.

A frontispiece of gracious import was that slender girl, all unconscious of her beauty and power, clinging fondly to the gloomy Alexander, whose thoughts, scarcely then for her, were dwelling on, possibly, darker scenes.

But were they not a likely pair? Near of kin, too. Yes, she leant *very* fondly on his arm. Did he know it?

"Never a word," said Simon Curtiss, as he eyed them, with ears pricked for worse. Perhaps he made a note, mentally, in the finest phonography.

Houri was pawing holes in the gravel, and champing the silvered bit till the white foam fell in specks on her sleek chest, and the groom was coddling her pretty head to trap her into patience, when Alexander walked hastily out, the captain at his heels, deep in eager suggestions. He sprang to his seat, Mr. Curtiss clambered to his place on his left hand, and then, receiving a fervent "goodspeed, my boy!" from the captain, and bowing a somber adieu to the friends gathered at the casement to see him off, Alexander curved into the leafy avenue, and then dashed off.

"Time is precious," remarked the oracular Mr. Curtiss, as they smoothly rolled through Gower lane.

"Precious, indeed!" returned Alexander, none the more patient for the spur. "What if we don't find the cabman?"

"I took care of that," said the detective, dryly. "I gave McJennet a hint yesterday to keep his eye on the fellow to-day, in case we might want him. Look, we are passing the old Manor house. What do you think of Mr. Spire's



theory of the carriage having hidden there? Think it possible?"

Alexander looked curiously at the ponderous gate, rounded and spiked at the top, studded with huge-headed nails, padlocked on the outside, and set deeply in the massive stone wall, which was overhung with the insidious ivy that was sapping its strength.

"Possible? Yes; but scarcely probable. I don't know, though. It can't be proved, you see. Ever been inside?" asked his curt colleague.

"Yes, I know the grounds well. Two years ago, when I came to live in the suburbs, I thought of buying the Manor house, but preferred Denburn, when I found out who were my neighbors. Heigho! Come Houri."

When, in due time, they turned into McJennet's stable-yard, Mr. Curtiss nudged Alexander with his elbow, and, following the direction of his glance, he saw a stout hostler mopping the glittering panels of a family coach with cold water from a bucket, and enlivening his toil by a steady hiss.

When he caught sight of the furrowed old face of little Mr. Curtiss, he suspended his occupation, and, leaning on his mop-handle, stared grimly at him, while he wiped his red face with a broad, brawny hand.

Another glance of Mr. Curtiss' eye restrained Alexander's eagerness, and, Mr. Curtiss calling up the man, gave their horses in charge, and then conducted Alexander to the private office, where they found McJennet himself.

"Back again, like Sinbad's old man," quoth Mr. Curtiss. "I see you've boxed him for me to open the lid and let him out, if he's good."

"I kept him for you to-day, but with some maneuvering," laughed the proprietor. "He begged most pathetically to get off on a holiday. I presume his perquisites of Tuesday evening must be burning a hole in his pocket; he *thirsts* to get rid of them."

"Be good enough to give us your office for perhaps five minutes, possibly a couple of hours, according as he proves contumacious, and send him in."

When Mr. McJennet had gone, Mr. Curtiss rose, opened the two doors of the counting-room, peered out into the passages, then closed one, locked it, and hid the key, and



sitting down waited with his chin on the top of his umbrella for his victim to enter through the other.

Presently he did so, with a dogged air. They heard Mr. McJennet turn the key of the entrance door, and the man smiled grimly.

"Now, Thompson, my fine fellow," began Mr. Curtiss, plunging at once to the heart of his subject. "I see you have made up your mind to tell us the little history you could not remember yesterday. We have proved the truth of the first chapter of the tale you so kindly related, and sympathize in the speedy *suction* of your old friend Forsyth's half crown into the jaws of five cronies at the bar; and now be good enough to trace to its source the reappearance of the succeding nineteen shillings and sixpence, which appears in the tavern bill against 'Davy Thompson, Tuesday, July twenty-sixth, received payment.'"

"Did I say that yester 'en?" asked the bothered cabman.

"Bosh! didn't you, though? You *may* have said so; perhaps you only composed the little fiction. Maybe I had a hand in its composition—who knows? You were very 'happy' that evening. Any way, not many half-crowns would have stood so long to represent drinks for a tavernful of brother cabbies twice round. Yours did, or else the 19s. 6d. did. Come, Thompson, no more gammon. You see I've been over the ground after you," said Mr. Curtiss, suavely.

Thompson growled in his beard.

"Ow, I ken ye're an officer in disguise," muttered Thompson.

Mr. Curtiss chuckled at his penetration.

"Let me present this gentleman to you, then," said he, with a smile. "Neither spy nor policeman, I assure you. Confide your innocent little adventure to him; he won't punish its guilt, and I won't convict its illegality, if you are truthful. Come, he is a friend of the lady we are seeking."

"Oh! it's a leddy ye're seekin', is it?" exclaimed the cabman. "I ken naething about the leddy ye're seekin'. The gentles may 'gree among themsels; it's no for the likes o' us dirt under their fit to meddle or mak atween them."

"*She* was neither selfish nor proud," pleaded Alexander, with emotion. "She was a true friend to the poor, and counted them not the dirt under her feet, but as her



"FLORICE, PUT THE VAIL OFF. IT'S NOT LUCKY FOR THE BRIDE."—(P. 7.)





brothers and sisters. I am sure you would not conceal any circumstance that might restore such a lady to her friends and family, if you had known her as scores of the poorest in the county knew her, an angel of mercy."

The rough fellow's sulky brows unbent. He began to look foolish.

"We'll make it worth your while to give us the story," interposed Mr. Curtiss, seeing the break in the clouds, and trying to edge in an additional lever.

"Hand yer ill tongue off me," retorted Thompson. "I dinna need to be bribed to speak for this gentleman, though doubtless he'd have to pay ye a pretty penny for spyin' for him. Sir (to Alexander), I canna tell ye muckle, but jest ken eneuch to mak some somethid' o'. Noo what is it ye want me to ken?"

His better nature was aroused. He waited in good faith for the cue.

"Just tell me where you drove the parties who hired your services after you left the old gentleman and his daughter in Earl Gray street."

Thompson put his hands in his pockets, took a sudden turn on his heels, jocosely whistling, then stood straight as a ramrod, leering at the little Curtiss, who, note-book on knee, was all ready to make hay while the sun shone.

"Weel, here's a bargain!" he broke out in a sudden burst of confidence. "When I tell ye a' about it, will ye let me keep the siller he gied me? I cam honestly by it, and could ha' tauld lang syne if I was na feared that the maister wad claim it."

"All right, my dear friend—keep it, and welcome," cried Mr. Curtiss, graciously. "Consider that siller as a reward from me for your modest merit, and not at all as a 'self-presented testimonial.'"

The happy Thompson turned his hands elbow deep into his jingling pockets, drew a long sigh of intense self-gratulation, and commenced:

"Weel, sir"—again to Alexander—"I didna drive onybody else onywhere on Tuesday afternoon, that's true eneuch, but I'll tell you what I did do.

"When auld Mr. Forsyth and his daughter were home again in Earl Gray street, I just wandered my ways into a dram-shop I knew there to drink the leddy's health in the half-crown he gied me," (this with a side



glance of malicious triumph at the unmoved Curtiss), "an' as I was counting out the ha'penny's worth for my chields, I saw a decent like mon, with a stout staff, and a lang traveling poncho, open the cab door, and look into the empty carriage; then he ran round to the ither side, an' opened that door, and pit his head into the carriage frae that 'side; and by this time I was stan'in on the door-step bawlin' at him. Then he walked back to me, and sayin', 'Is this cab occupied?' I said it wasna; that it was just waitin' for him to occupy it; an' he asked, fule-like, if I kent wha was in it last. And I swore I didna. Then he stood twirlin' his thums, while he glanced at me a' ower, and by and by he handed me a bit o' paper, and said, 'D'ye ken wha that is?' I read it, and said I didna. 'That's me,' said he, 'an' that's my address. I want to hire this cab for a matter o' four hours, maybe longer. Gie it to me wi'out yoursel' to drive it, an' forbye the regular fare, ye sal hae this gowden guinea to yoursel'.' Weel, as I was very drouthy then, an' my cronies were waitin' at the bar for me, I jist said ay, an' to bring my horses back to the tavern, an' he poked his guinea into my loaf, climbed up into my box, an' drove awa'. Sae I waited there, an' got roarin' fou, an' at last he comes back wi' the nags a' weet an' pantin' wi' heavy drivin'. He took me frae the shop, an' helped me to my place. 'Gang hame, my good fellow,' says he, 'an' take thae fine brutes out o' harness, an' pit them safely up, an' lay yersel' safely doon. An' I advise ye, as a freend, no' to show yersel' or yer horses to your maister, or ye may get a dismissal in the morn.' Then he gied me a five-pound note, and caed me a sober, honest chap, an' I cam hame to McJennet's."

Mr. Curtiss looked up from his note-book, where he was writing, word for word.

"Hand me the gentleman's card."

Thompson dived into the depths of his trousers pockets, and produced it.

"W. McGillvray, Midlothian Hotel," was neatly engraved on the enameled card.

"Are you sure you could identify him again if called on to do so?"

Thompson nodded confidently.

"Describe him, then."



“A lang, thin mon, as lean as the links o’ the crook, wi’ black booles on een, an’ a crooked nose. He wasna a bonnie chield, but he was gay young, maybe forty-five.”

“Very good, Thompson. Now, what time did he come for the cab?”

“Maybe half-past four.”

“And when did he bring it back?”

“I wonna say, for I’m no sur awa. I got hame aboot seven; I suppose he micht ha cam to me near sax.”

“Very good,” repeated Mr. Curtiss, elated. “That corresponds exactly with the hour or the disappearance. One question more, though. When Mr. Forsyth and Mrs. Cargill were out riding, did you stop anywhere that they might have obtained a spray of holly leaves?”

“That I didna,” replied Thompson, stoutly. “I never set my two een on branch or berry till ye poked thae bit leafies up frae the yird i’ the stablery. But I’m sure that it wasna in my cab when I left Tuesday morn.”

Mr. Curtiss closed his book with a snap.

“Well, Davy Thompson,” said he, encouragingly, “for a witness who promised nothing, you have achieved wonders. Here, accept this trifle—*not* self-presented this time.”

He threw the cabman a guinea, which he dextrously caught in his left hand, and tossed to the ceiling to catch it in his right.

“Now for Midlothian Hotel,” said Mr. Curtiss, briskly.

He rang a bell. The door was unlocked by McJennet himself.

“All right,” whispered the detective to him. “Let Thompson off without further question. *He has given us the clew at last.*”

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## CHAPTER VI.

### STRANDED.

It was well on toward twelve o’clock before Alexander and Mr. Curtiss accomplished their next proceeding—the visitation of Mr. Gillvray. When first they presented themselves at the Midlothian Hotel they were told that “Mr. Gillvray was out; he was always out every morning.”



"Where?" asked Curtiss, secretly amazed at finding Mr. McGillvray a bodily substance at all.

"Vell, it's 'ard to say where, sir," answered Mr. Downs, the hotel-keeper, who was an Englishman, suavely seating his visitors in the public parlor. "Mr. McGillvray is a gentleman as 'as plenty of money and plenty of time to spend it, sir; and *where* he goes of a morning to be amused, I can't pretend to say, sir."

"All right—we'll wait," quoth the officer, contentedly, laying hat and gloves on the table. "When he comes, tell him gentlemen are waiting to see him."

They had not waited long, when the landlord came to them and said:

"Gents, Mr. Gillvray 'as arrived, and waits the honor. No. 21, sir; right-hand side," and retreated.

The room was found, and Curtiss executed a low, scientific platoon upon the door, and a bland voice cried, "Come in."

They entered, and were face to face with a gentleman of about middle age, florid, sandy-whiskered, a trifle bald, and with a slender, youthful-looking figure; yet, withal, an air as if W. McGillvray, Esq., was no stranger to the good things of this life; but in no way resembling the "long, lean man" described by the coachman. He was drawn up in his arm-chair close to the window, in rather a timorous attitude, and glanced apprehensively from one to the other of his visitors.

"Hem," muttered Curtiss to himself, "Thompson *has* been pretty drunk. Ah," clearing his throat, "Mr. McGillvray?" showing the enameled card.

"Yes, that is my name and my card," replied the gentleman, glancing at it.

"This gentleman," pursued Curtiss, setting himself vigorously to business, "is Mr. Buccleugh, of Denburn, Tower Lane (watching Mr. McGillvray with a keen eye as he said this. He saw no change in the expectant face, ready to acknowledge the introduction at the proper moment) "and I am Simon Curtiss, his friend."

Mr. McGillvray rose and bowed twice.

"Will you pardon my apparent rudeness, if I ask you a few unimportant questions on behalf of Mr. Buccleugh, who is much interested in getting a small fact, relating indirectly to you, settled to his mind?"



"Oh, certainly," said the gentleman, with a puzzled look.

Mr. Curtiss cleared his throat again, produced his notebook, and ran over it.

"I got your card from a cabman, who stated that it was given him by a gentleman who occupied his carriage on Tuesday evening last. Did you hire a cab at any inn on Tuesday evening last?"

"Although the card is mine, I was in no cab on Tuesday evening. Whoever used the card was an impostor, I assure you, gentlemen," said Mr. McGillvray, looking sorely puzzled.

"The reason why we called upon you, Mr. McGillvray," broke in Alexander, heedless of a motion to restrain himself from Mr. Curtiss, "is the necessity we are under of discovering a certain person who occupied one of Mr. McJennet's carriages on Tuesday evening, between five and six o'clock."

He then stated the sudden disappearance of his bride-elect, and the suspicions which attached to the occupants of the carriage as her abductors, together with the finding of the card.

"Oh, I now see why you came to me," said Mr. McGillvray, hotly. "The villain who got the carriage for this atrocious business stole my card, hoping to make me appear as the forcible abductor of the lady. I am sincerely grieved, Mr. Buccleugh, that such a great misfortune should have overtaken you; but assure you that I am in no way accountable for it."

Both Alexander and Mr. Curtiss had been convinced of this the moment they had entered Mr. McGillvray's room, and they now rose and begged his pardon for their intrusion. He responded with warm wishes for their success in the search.

"Mr. Buccleugh, not so fast!" whispered Curtiss, as Alexander was hastening out of the hotel; "we're not done with the landlord yet; one or two questions of him, and *then* we'll go. Step in here."

He preceded the way into the public parlor they had left before, and seated himself comfortably.

"Go and fetch Mr. Downs here a minute," he cried to a waiter who was passing the door.

"Now, Mr. Buccleugh, it's *now or never*," he whispered,



nodding significantly; "if we can't get the story of the card out of this hotel, we're checkmated in this move."

Mr. Downs entered pompous—suave as ever.

"Vell, gentlemen, what can I do for you?"

"This gentleman would like you to be so good as to help him to same information," said Curtiss.

"Always 'appy to oblige a gentleman," responded the Englishman.

"Mr. Buccleugh, my friend—and patron—ahem! is very anxious to know if any gentleman—man—or messenger of any kind, called here to see our honored friend Mr. McGillvray, during his absence on Tuesday afternoon, from two to four o'clock."

"Any gent—man—or snob to see Mr. McGillvray, Tuesday afternoon. No, sir."

"No one here having a card, or perhaps sent by him for his card-case, which he might have forgotten?" suggested the wary Curtiss, with *finesse*.

The burly hotel-keeper continued slowly shaking his head.

"Try to remember;" now broke in Alexander, eager and comprehending. "I *must* know how Mr. McGillvray's card was obtained and made use of by some stranger on Tuesday evening."

"*That's* it sir!" cried Downs, "now you bring it clear—now you 'urveys up my memory! I gave a card to Mr. Forsyth on Tuesday morning, as a direction back to this 'ere 'otel; and faith, neither Mr. Forsyth, sir, nor a vestige of him, sir, have been here since, whatever's the reason sir, and his valise and umbrella and mackintosh awaiting him 'ere, sir."

"Explain," urged Mr. Buccleugh in surprise; "we have surely heard that name to-day before—have we, Curtiss?"

That gentleman, with snapping eyes and watchful mien, silently nodded—and out came the note book.

"Vell, sir," said Downs, "I'll tell you all about it. On Monday evening, sir, a gentleman arrived 'ere in a 'ackney cab from the railway station, just straight from Aberdeen. Vell, sir, he stayed 'ere all night, and in the morning about nine o'clock, he sends for me and he says, 'My good man, I'm going to see my daughter, and I want to spend the day with her, poor thing, and I'm coming back here to get my things and return to Aberdeen on the night train. Now,



Mr. Downs, I've an awful short memory, and when I step out of this 'andsome 'otel, and find a carriage and drive away to my daughter, and yet thinking of her — I'll forget where this 'ere house is — where this 'ere street is — what's your name — and what the name of your 'otel is, for I've never been in Edinburgh before; so, my good sir, you must give me your address that I may know where to come back.' Then I considered a minute, until I thought of the gents' cards that they leaves in the basket there on the mantel-piece, and I went and took one out."

"What do you keep 'em there for?" cut in Mr. Curtiss, holding his book in the hollow of his hand and attentively scribbling behind his hat.

"Vy, sir, when any of my gentlemen boarders go out without seeing me and don't intend to come back to dinner they steps in 'ere and leaves their card in this basket, and I looks them over before dinner and sets the covers accordingly. So as I was telling you I 'anded out Mr. McGill-vray's card because the address was on it. Mr. Forsyth took it thankfully and dropped it into his big, burly pocket-book, and then he went away to get a carriage, and I 'aven't seen him since. He 'asen't forgotten the 'otel after all, surely; then vy doesn't he send for his valise, which waits in his room just as he left it?"

"And that's all?" said Mr. Curtiss, pocketing his report and rising. "That's all we want here, sir. Mr. Buccleugh come along."

"I am really much indebted to your kindness in supplying me with this information," said Alexander, stopping a moment in his gentle, courteous fashion, and placing a guinea upon the table.

"Proud to be of service, sir — proud to be of service."

Once on the street, Curtiss stepped into his importance again.

"Now, Mr. Buccleugh," he chirruped briskly, "the chances are that we have got the nut open at last. Now for the cracking of the kernel. We're going to the telegraph office to have a few words with this *very* nice Aberdeenian."

Quickly they traversed the distance, entered the building and soon the first bulletin was flying over the wires, first to the chief inspector of police, Aberdeen, demanding the address of Jonas Forsyth, Esq., hosier and glover. The answer was speedily obtained: "No. —, Union street."



Then that gentleman was himself addressed, as if from the deserted Downs: "Had he forgotton to send for his valise, etc., at Midlothian Hotel, Nicholson street?"

Answer—"Mr. Downs:—Dear sir:—Old Nick *was* in my pocket. Lost the card before I had been out an hour; forgot your blessed name; came home in the shirt I left Aberdeen, much to Mrs. F.'s disgust. Forward valise in evening train to yours gratefully,  
J. FORSYTH."

Mr. Curtiss took this telegam with knit brows, his small, keen eyes snapped wrathfully, the corners of his mouth came down in a droop, he flung himself out of the office, leaving Alexander to finish the arrangements, and send a note to Downs with Mr. Forsyth's message.

"Lost it!" he muttered between his teeth, as once more they stood together in the street. "The card has been a blind, and Mr. McGillvray has shared the honors with Thompson, the groom, of keeping us off the track of being ignorant tools, until the villains have had time to escape. They've been too many for us there; *that* carriage is disposed of. If Buckle's proves as unproductive, I'm afraid, Mr. Buccleugh—I'm *afraid* the *game is lost*."

"We shall hear Captain Drummond's success," sighed Alexander.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### ADRIFT AND RUDDERLESS.

Sorrowful, indeed, was that Thursday in July to the dear young bride-maids who stood together for the last time in the charming parlor which had witnessed so many merry days; tears dripping unchecked, but words of heroic hope on their lips.

The cousins—Madge Severn and Marian Gordon—were going home.

Mrs. Ellathorne had objected, Florice had implored, and Jessie Buccleugh had dropped tears. But, with the innate delicacy that so signally distinguishes the true lady, the two girls, though knowing themselves to be very dear friends of the family, yet felt that none but those of closest claim should witness its deadly misfortune, when they were powerless to alleviate.



“We’ll ride over on horseback as soon as we may,” said Madge, with quivering lips; “and if Glennie should come back”—she clasped her hands in deep emotion—“as I pray every day she may, then, Florice, will send for Madge to come and cry with you, when your dear heart is bursting in two with joy? Good-by, Mrs. Ellathorne. May I kiss you good-by?”

She was folded to the heart of the mourning lady, who wishfully clung to her pleasant guests, with reluctance letting them leave her and Florice.

“You are bereaving us of a great boon, my bairns,” said she, sadly. “We need your young, sanguine blood to keep our hope alive.”

“Now, dear Captain Drummond,” said the womanly Marian to her moody host, “don’t be letting your apprehensions of defeat get the upper hand of you. Mind, it’s always darkest before dawn. My old nurse used to tell me, ‘However black the clouds, there’s aye the bonnie blue lift beyond!’ Don’t be downhearted, sir, as long as you can look up through a rift in the cloud and see the sky that our Father has painted with the hue of hope!”

The lion-hearted captain blessed her in his soul for those little words in season. Truly he had need of somebody to point to his well-nigh forgotten “Captain above” in this hour of doubt and impatience.

Each gentle maiden took the quiet Florice in her arms, and kissed her waxen cheek, and then Madge and Marian stepped into the barouche which Mr. Severn had sent from the city for his daughter and niece, and slowly rolled down the rustling way to Gower lane, and left poor Lady-Bank with its sorrow.

Wearily waited Captain Drummond for the promised messenger who was to announce the discovery of the unknown brothers; and, at last, appeared a rattling street cab. The man descended, opened the dingy door, let down the shaky step, and out slipped the expected ambassador.

A long-bodied man, though short-legged withal; a long-headed man, though *not* wondrous wise-like; a man with a pale, smooth, and obsequious face; a man who wore rusty black, with many a dissembling wrinkle to hide a seam, and an unassuming black beaver, which an underhand manner contrived to make him seem almost a *gentlemanly* man. He stood revealed.



“My name is Wynde, sir. Captain Drummond, is it not? Mr. Spires sent me.”

The captain sprang down the five shallow steps and landed at his side, and, crowding him cheek by jowl and knee by knee in his hurry and eagerness, cried, joyfully:

“Glad to see you, Mr. Wynde. You’ve overhauled our man? What?”

“Yes, sir. I was the officer commissioned by the director to trace the individual you wanted. I have done so. I await to conduct you to his house.”

“Bravo!” cried the captain, rushing into the hall for his hat and gloves. “Jump in, Mr. Wynde!” exclaimed he, in great excitement, to the calm sleuth-hound who had brought down the game. “I’ll be with you directly.”

He stepped to the parlor window, where drooped the listless Florice. He took her chilly hand and warmed it between his own.

“Cheer you, my bonnie birdie!” whispered the bearded captain. “Cheer your sad heart! Who knows—maybe I’ll bring her back with me! Is that the face you’ll greet her with?”

She looked at him, breathless, a thrill thawing the chill blood in her veins, her blue eyes deepening into black orbs of passionate yearning.

“Oh, guardie! oh, guardie!” she gasped, her brown head resting upon his arm.

He drew her up to his strongly beating heart, held her close in a momentary rapture, and left something else from the fullness of his hope on her disordered hair than the impulsive kiss. It stilled her—that strongly beating heart. It spoke of room for blessed anticipation, of anticipation possibly fulfilled, and not only of forlorn wishings.

Then he left her; and with scarlet cheeks and passionate gaze she watched the shabby street cab, which drove to Gower lane, and rattled out of sight.

“By the by, Mr. Wynde, how did you find the gentlemen, and who are they?” asked the captain, breaking the silence.

Mr. Wynde smiled, and in smiling showed his long, keen, hungry teeth.

“Ah, sir!” said he, with relish, “it *was* a ticklish job, you may be sure. I had Buckle’s groom out with me all the



morning, and found him at last on the porch of the church on Castlehill."

"Bosh," says I, surprised when the groom nudged me. 'Is *that* your mysterious character? Why, half Edinburgh knows him.'"

"Well, who was he?" asked the captain, when Mr. Wynde paused to air his hungry teeth again.

"Who, indeed, but Philip Hazeldean, barrister at law. 'Now, what's he looking in that church for?' thinks I. 'A marriage or a funeral? And is he guarding the door from some unwelcome power that may stop proceedings?' And I dismissed Buckle's groom, and stole past Mr. Hazeldean before he saw me, and poked my head into the church. Humph! I drew it back pretty quick, though, when I met the eyes of a whole prayer-meeting on their feet, and the beadle leaping to the door to hustle me out. I was standing devout as a parson with my hat off, like Mr. Hazeldean himself, when the chap reached us, and, looking naturally at the youngest and most slashing of the two who stood in the porch, reproached Mr. Hazeldean for his 'unco irreverence.' He laughed till he was sick, and then said he was waiting for his wife, which was just what I wanted to hear, and I vanished, called the first trap I saw empty, and came for you. Now, Captain Drummond, be very cautious how you approach the subject of your questions to the lawyer; for he's as quick as the wind. You can't fool him, and if he wants to conceal, he'll dodge you half a day. Don't give him a chance to know what you are after till you have surprised as much as you can out of him. Especially remember to ask where his brother is just now, and if you can see him; and here we are."

Mr. Wynde pulled the check-string. The cab stopped before an iron-railed double house in Nicholson street; the captain descended. Mr. Wynde gave a parting whisper of caution, and then the cab rolled around the corner, where Mr. Wynde preferred to lurk.

Captain Drummond opened the trim iron gate, and walked up the narrow, box-trimmed path, looking around him with a sensation of intuitive prepossession with the people who could arrange such a pretty scene. On either hand spread a mosaic of brilliant tints, most artistically arranged, octagonal plats of mignonette and blue forget-me-nots, little chaparrals of variegated foxglove and snapdragon, wastes



of velvet pansies, and the golden-chaliced ranunculus. Animals and shrubs in graceful array met the delighted eye on every side; while, divided from this prairie of luxuriance by a tiny ornamental palisade, a strip of emerald turf stretched from the bolted door of the unoccupied and the double house to the iron railing that closed the whole in from Nicholson street.

On this inviting play-ground two manly little fellows were disporting themselves with might and main.

As the handsome captain paused a moment to look at the picture, with a half-unconscious smile, the little men stopped their play, and regarded him with the button-eyed curiosity of childhood, and the older of the twain stepped forward and opened the light gate in the wooden palisade, and tripped with pretty care off the borders, through the devious paths, to the captain's side.

"Do you want papa, sir?" demanded Master Hazeldean, looking up into the gentleman's face with growing confidence. "Well, sir, there's the door, and papa is home, and I'll get him. Come along."

He ran on before the captain, stopping now and then to beckon him with his little brown hand, and when he had conveyed him to the door, bounded in to find somebody.

Standing outside, Captain Drummond had nothing to do but to glance through the open window at his elbow to see a very pretty bit of life. A graceful though mature lady sat by a wicker-work table in a distant corner of the large, airy apartment, one foot on the rocker of a mahogany cradle, where lay a tiny sprite of perhaps two years, whose rose-leaf hands clutched the tassels of the lady's dainty gown, and whose wide, bright eyes dwelt on the smiling face above her.

And the fair lady rocked the baby's cradle, and sewed her baby's milk-white "pinies," and musically sang the sprite to sleep in the tender rhyme of "My bonnie wee cradlin' dov'!"

The captain's kindling eyes expressed all his admiration when she presently glanced through the window, perhaps to peep at her other pretty ones, and met his gaze. With a little start, followed by instant self-possession, she rose, and came to the door herself.

"I am so sorry you should have been kept waiting so long," said she, gently. "I saw my little Moray leading



you to the house, and thought he showed you in. Come in, sir. Don't stand in the sun."

"Thank you; you are very good," replied the captain, quite charmed; and she conducted him to a drawing-room, and comfortably seating him, withdrew, promising to send Mr. Hazeldean to him.

It was a dainty little nest of a drawing-room, cool, deliciously toned in its tints, and perfumed with summer odor.

At first the visitor looked out, between the fleecy lace curtains, at the waving tops of the blossoms without; from thence his careless glance wandered to the broad, vase-adorned mantel-piece and there became riveted.

It was only a female profile—a proud female profile and bust, which some original artist had filled in with a few curving lines of tressss and drapery, and set in a weird framing of sprites, fairy pranks of foliage and southern flowers, all in richest gold.

The captain rose, and took the tiny thing in his hand, turned the back—no name or sign—and put it up again. Why was it that the queenly pride of that perfect half-face and molded bust brought so distinctly to him the memory of Glencora Calvert?

He was still contemplating the richly mounted profile, when the drawing-room door was opened, and his host entered. He was a frank and pleasant-mannered gentleman, of perhaps thirty, agreeably cordial.

He greeted the captain kindly, receiving the announcement of his name with wonderful pleasure, shaking hands most heartily upon it, and then they seated themselves, and the captain opened his business thus:

"Now, Mr. Hazeldean, how am I to approach the subject I have come to speak of without running the risk of disagreeably surprising you?" said he, with ingenuous embarrassment. "I must promise that the questions I have come to put to you, not only concern my own affairs, but also yours. May I ask some very strange things without offending you before I have time to explain?"

Mr. Hazeldean, patting softly the arms of his easy-chair, stared at his visitor in wonder.

"What can you be referring to?" said he, good-humoredly, "I'm quite sure I have never been connected with you in business or pleasure—wish I had. Question away,



Captain Drummond; I'll answer anything you like—about my own matters, you know."

The poor captain looked anxiously at the good face opposite him, and tried to recall Mr. Wynde's instructions in finesse; but, becoming more confused the longer he deliberated, he flung policy to the winds, and stood revealed, a guardian in search of a missing ward.

He gave a brief account of the lady's disappearance, their exertions in every direction, their utter want of an object of suspicion except the barren proof of the carriage which Alexander Buccleugh was now tracing to its source, and lastly, Mr. Spires' anecdote about Buckle's stables.

At this point Mr. Hazeldean, who had been listening with grave attention, suddenly bent forward in his chair, his bronzed countenance showing unmistakable signs of uneasiness and agitation, and with increasing anxiety he heard to the end of the captain's disclosure.

Captain Drummond made that end with the significant words:

"Now, Mr. Hazeldean, by the grief of her sister, and the despair of her promised husband, I adjure you to tell me all you can about that drive your brother took on Tuesday afternoon. A few words may clear him completely from suspicion, a few words may fasten suspicion upon him; but, remember, if these words are unspoken, it is you who will doom an innocent family to a torturing mystery and dread. Of my own feelings I cannot speak. This is the bitterest blow I have ever received. The harder to bear, that it has been dealt in the dark, and by a power I cannot trace."

"Captain Drummond," returned the agitated lawyer, "how shall I answer you? Every word you have said bears heavy significance to me. I dare not let my thoughts take shape. I warn you, you are, as far as I can judge, on the brink of a dreadful discovery, if, after comparing notes, we can agree on the identity of the ladies. Must I speak the words that may plunge you into a yet deeper misery than the harassing misery you now suffer?"

The captain's face grew dark; he looked after Mr. Hazeldean, pacing the drawing-room with gloomy eyes downcast.

"Mr. Hazeldean, I am a strong-hearted man, and I have weathered many a wild gale, but I am not brave enough to bear suspense, nor quick enough to fathom your dark meaning. Out with it, man; let us compare notes before we look



ahead for breakers. You admit that you were with your brother that day at Buckle's stables?"

The lawyer seated himself, crushing back the uneasy foreboding in his breast, and earnestly gave his testimony.

"Yes, my brother Moray and I were at these stables on the day you mention. Just as you heard, everything took place. Of course you wish explanations. You wish at once to prove whether the lady we spoke of, and the lady you are in search of, are identical. What is the name of your quondam ward?"

"Glencora Calvert—Lady-Bank," said the captain.

Again Mr. Hazeldean showed pained concern.

"My dear sir, you will soon know why I am so reluctant to proceed," said he. "There was a mystery connected with my brother's friend which I never fathomed. May I ask you a few questions? Well, permit me: Has Miss Calvert been abroad on the Continent?"

"She has not, sir. She staid quietly at home all winter."

"Has she been long engaged to the gentleman you spoke of?"

"Above a year. What *are* you driving at?"

"Wait a minute, my dear sir. Has Moray Hazeldean ever been at your residence? Try to remember a tall fellow, quite resembling me in face, but younger, a traveler and artist. He used to enter the highest circles unreprieved, in search of female beauties for models; he was rather original in the art."

The captain deliberated a while, but finally answered in the negative.

"I am sure no gentleman of your name visited the girls. The sisters were always very fond of me, sailor though I am, and told me about all their friends. *Now* what have you discovered?"

Mr. Hazeldean rose and went to the mantel shelf; he took down the gilded profile and held it before Captain Drummond's horrified eyes.

"Is this like her—like Miss Calvert?" he demanded.

The captain could only gaze at its perfect resemblance to Glencora, and mutely look into the troubled face of the lawyer for further explanation.

"I see in your manner that this whimsical shade, which my foolish Moray prized above richest paintings, bears heavily in the evidence. I never heard the true history of this



profile, but I know that Moray executed it himself, sometime in May—of course from the original, and caused his engraver to frame it so. I know he loved the woman whose features are covertly expressed there, and that he thought he had reason to keep her name, history, and residence a secret even from Mrs. Hazeldean and me. Now, Captain Drummond, you have told me enough to authorize me in relating Moray's story in elucidation of Miss Calvert's strange disappearance the night before the wedding. The two histories so curiously linked by the eavesdropping of Buckle's groom may have no connection; for your sake I trust they have not, but facts look meaning. Four months ago Moray came home to Edinburgh from Venice. He had been spending the winter in Venice, for the sake of his art, and because he was a sad malcontent in sobersided Edinburgh. When he came to us in April, we thought him not looking so well, and Mrs. Hazeldean prevailed on him to stay some months with us instead of living at a hotel, and she nursed him and cheered him up a bit. She was always very fond of Moray, and he told her many things he never thought of communicating to me. Of course Maisy, sensible woman, did not come with his confidences to me, and so I was a good deal puzzled sometimes to account for his varying moods. But when things got serious she told me what was the matter.

“One day Moray went to her in great excitement, saying he had seen an old flame of his, a magnificent creature, whom he had loved a long time, but who had just told him she was engaged to marry another. On hearing that, Moray had given her up, but that day she had sent for him, and told him that she had quarreled with her lover, and that she could never care for him as she had done, and that though they were still engaged, she could never fulfill the engagement, for she had every reason to believe that the union would not be a happy one. She implored Moray to save her from the dreaded marriage, and gave him encouragement in supposing she truly loved him, and not her bridegroom. Mrs. Hazeldean advised him to wait a while and see if she was sincere, for such hasty decision on a Scotch lady's part was very unusual, and she thought the lady was very passionate, and too pronounced. Moray said something about her being very different from Scotch ladies, that she could be haughty as an empress to all but



the one she loved, and that she melted to confiding sweetness to him alone.

“However, it appears that he did not take any decided step for some weeks, and then he came to me and told me some of his affairs. He wanted to marry a lady whose very name, he said, must not be breathed to Maisy or me, until she had changed it to his name. It was her secret, and he had no right to peril her safety by divulging it, until he had a legal right to protect her from all future annoyance. Then he proposed to me that he should like to take a trip through the North, and he would endeavor to efface her image from his memory. We were gone on our trip during the latter part of June, and the first two weeks of July. It is ten days since we arrived home again. I think Moray would never have corresponded with the lady again, for we were at home a week before he did so—if she had not written to him last Monday. He came hastily to Mrs. Hazeldean in the afternoon, and told her that it was useless for him to try to desert the woman who loved him, say what Phil would. (I am Phil, you see.) He would never be happy with another, and that spite of everything he would go and see her. That she had expected him to come to her every day since his return, but, as he had not done so, she was obliged to write for him to hasten to her side, and when he came that she had a dreadful story to tell him. Mrs. Hazeldean listened to the passages Moray read her from the young lady’s letter, but did not get the letter in her own hand. She describes it as written in a flowing, graceful hand, very impassioned in style, and signed by rather a long name at the bottom of the page. She says her heart was wrung as he read; the brief wild words seemed to burst from the writer’s unhappy soul; but she again counseled Moray to give fair play to the former lover, who certainly had a prior claim to the young lady, and who perhaps loved her as fervently as Moray himself did.

“This Moray passionately denied, saying that he knew enough of that dissembler to hate him as much as his poor friend feared him. However, he again consulted me when I came home. I took him in hand and used my utmost to dissuade him from marrying the unknown woman, who was false to truth and honor, or she would never appeal to him for protection and not to her friends.

“‘Alas!’ sighed Moray, ‘my girl has no friends; they



are all his friends, and therefore no protection to her.' Yet he had such regard to my wishes that he delayed going to seek an interview with her till next day. Tuesday, the 25th, at luncheon, a tiny envelope was brought him, which, when he opened and read, filled him with consternation, and he got up and pushed it into my hand. I only glanced once over it, and that once in much bewilderment; therefore I cannot repeat exactly the few words I read, but they were to the effect that the crisis had come; that he had left her to her fate, and she would be lost to him forever. Once more she implored him, for the sake of their old days, to make one effort to save her from her lover, who was on the point of claiming her, while she dared make no opposition. I remember well the initials at the end of the note—you may judge of the significance of the foregoing story when I tell you that they were 'G. C.' Was this meant for Glencora Calvert? And is it possible that such things could happen to a young lady living in the close relations to you that she did, without either yourself, your sister, or her sister, Florice, ever obtaining one peep behind the scenes of that double-faced life? No, I don't think it possible, and yet the secret might lie with her lover. Shall I continue? I shrink from the succeeding events, as one might falter on the brink of a volcanic caldron. You who wait for my disclosure little know the awful thought my words will give substance to.

"Well, sir, I shall briefly give you the rest. After I had read the unhappy lady's last prayer from a doom she did not shape into words, I objected no more to my brother's resolution to go to her, but also gave my promise that I would accompany him that afternoon to her residence, and make her acquaintance, with a view of offering her an asylum in my own house, if she was in personal danger from her lover's cruelty, as Moray seemed to intimate. Mrs. Hazelden pleaded hard for the poor, friendless girl, while I—well, my heart seemed turned to flint whenever I contemplated the union. I withstood it to the last, alas! I fear my dissuasions proved too powerful for the hapless 'G. C.' It was sharp on five o'clock when Moray and I entered Buckle's stables, and all the time I had been preaching prudence to my brother. Something he said in the yard as the horses were being harnessed nettled me—something to the effect that he was quite ready to run off with her



if he could not get her openly; something that showed he had one of his impulsive fits on; upon which I refused to accompany him that day at all, until he should change his mood. Poor Moray, in desperation, drove off himself, leaving me standing in remorseful amazement at the reality of his love for a woman I was in the habit of stigmatizing in my own mind as a false-hearted girl, who schemed for Moray's wealth. How I repent of that injustice now, if injustice it was. Knowing that my brother's blood was up, and that he was a haughty man to deal with when roused, I walked home, and confided the trouble to my wife, who, showing me my masculine want of tact, advised me to go back at half-past six o'clock and meet Moray, and make my peace with him, whatever he had done. Back I went at six to Buckle's stables, and in half an hour Moray rushed in with the carriage. He was in a fearful state, white, breathless, and incoherent. I could hardly make anything out of him at first. At last it all came out. He had gone to her house, had not seen her, she was not there. 'Her infernal lover has either put her out of the way, where she'll tell no tales of him, or she has fled from Great Britain,' Moray muttered to me, as we walked along the street. Startled, I asked why her lover should take her life, and Moray turned away his face and groaned; and then he said, 'Perhaps she knew that of him that might cause him to lose his life, unless he had the security of her love, and when he found out her love for me, there was but one chance of safety for him, through her sweet life. I'll soon find her retreat, if she's alive. I know where she went. But if my girl is dead, I'll hunt her murderer, be the scent ever so cold; I'll take it up, and I'll hunt him to the death!

"He said much more in the same frantic way, but forever keeping her secret, and then, in spite of my prayers and entreaties, he bade me a long good-by in the street, and took another cab for the railway station. He did not come to see his sister-in-law, or the boys, much as he loves them, but I think he was almost beside himself at having lost her. His last words were, 'When I find her I'll bring her back to Edinburgh as my wife, and we'll live in the other half of your double house, Phil. If I don't find her I'll find *him*, and you'll hear a fearful story then.' With this my brother left me, and I am at this moment as ignorant of his next movement or his present abode as you are. Now, Captain



Drummond, with our knowledge of Glencora Calvert's disappearance, what in heaven's name are we to think of all this?"

Sitting as if carved in stone, the captain neither spoke nor moved for full five minutes after Mr. Hazeldean had concluded; but at last the creeping horror in his blue eyes gave place to a flash of scorn and incredulity.

"There is one fact, Mr. Hazeldean," said he, huskily. "Your brother's carriage was not seen on the road; McJennet's carriage was. Two vehicles were not seen in Gower lane between five and six."

Mr. Hazeldean shook his head mournfully.

"It won't do, sir," said he. "That won't stand for circumstantial evidence. My brother's carriage might have gone through Gower lane *after* six. You know he was too late to find her. Examine your servants. Some one of them must have been in the habit of communicating from the lady to my brother. You'll find a screw loose there, no doubt. My dear sir, let us be calm and face the possibility."

The captain, white to the lips, stretched out his hands with a gesture of anguish.

"Mr. Hazeldean," he uttered, solemnly; "you know the thought that has come into my breast at the relation of this story. You know the awful idea that is gradually gaining shape in your own; but don't—don't for heaven's sake utter the wicked words that will condemn Alexander—that will, whether I will or not, poison my mind against the noblest, most truthful, and most fearless of men. Ah, what am I to do with this frightful suspicion? As I speak it gains ground. Mr. Hazeldean, what do you think?"

Mr. Hazeldean's averted face and his nervous manner too clearly spoke his distress, but he turned around with a calmer manner, and anxiously sought to soothe his disturbed visitor.

"Captain Drummond, withhold your judgment, and stop your thoughts before they make another inch of progress. Let us wait for a letter from Moray. If 'G. C.' is alive he will find her. If dead, he will find *him*. You consider her identity as good as proved by the profile, the initials, the similarity of circumstance, and the hour of her disappearance. My advice is—wait and see. If your friend, Mr. Buccleugh, has not traced Glencora Calvert during his search this afternoon, we have lost all trace of her till Moray finds



it for us. Let us not put a foot on that darker road of foul suspicion, seeking the lost one, till we hear from him. Are we agreed?"

"Thank you; you have decided wisely for me. I shall do as you say. I put myself in your hands. Mr. Hazeldean, I am no longer master of my own motives and inclinations. With this fearful thing to battle against, I am not fit to decide on anything. You have been very kind, my dear sir, in taking part of the burden of this affliction off my shoulders."

Captain Drummond rose stiffly from his chair, and shook his stalwart frame, somewhat as the kingly lion might throw off the deadly clinging snares which the tiny mouse had nibbled through to give him freedom.

"That 'wait' may be a long one," said he, as he shook hands at parting; "but we'll wait it through, and if it leads to nothing, then Anthony Drummond will nerve himself to action."

Both gentlemen's hands shook a little as they clasped them warmly at parting. Each perceived in that strong clasp the whole-souled confidence of the other.

"Captain Drummond, when you need a friend, come to me," said Philip Hazeldean, earnestly. Then they parted.

And as Captain Drummond walked down the trim garden path, where the spicy pinks shed incense, and the Spanish rabbits capered on the green, his face was gray with an awful pallor, his lips compressed sternly. And when he reached the cab in its covert, and Mr. Wynde asked, and asked in vain, for the result of his consultation, he only replied with abstracted manner:

"I have no further need of you, Mr. Wynde. Go to Mr. Spires and tell him I have failed."

And marveling much, and observing all he could, Mr. Wynde slipped away to do so.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### MY LADY IN STATE

There was a certain highland house which was falling sadly into misfortune. The principal family of the clan had dwindled down to one surviving representative, a



female, the next heir to her being a cousin, also a woman. The only other scion of the declining family was an old man, whose three stout sons would inherit nothing but noble blood, with little gold to keep it warm, while the fair lady owned goodly gear.

Lady Rosecleer Strathmore's horses might have been shod with gold, her hounds hung with silver bells, if she liked; for she owned half a county, and was sole heiress of her father's land and title. But Lady Rosecleer Strathmore hated her eerie highland towers with no common sincerity, and shunned her ignorant but blindly loyal people with persevering ingenuity, and ever since she had become of age she had deserted Strathmore Tower and lived a gayer life about the queen in London. Perhaps she was right; for her only inducement to stay at home since her courtly old father's death was to queen it over three or four hundred peasants, ride out with the hounds and her stalwart cousins, Gavin, Robin, and Kenneth Strathmore. And as soon as she understood that the only use she could make of herself, for the welfare of Strathmore, was to marry one of the cousins, in order to perpetuate the true Strathmore blood, my Lady Rosecleer flung averse looks at her fate, and, taking the law in her own hands, fled from Strathmore Towers, snugly ensconced in the heart of England's capital, defied such doom, and became a favorite among the English nobility. Lady Rosecleer Strathmore had not seen her birthplace for years, and only drew her revenues at proper intervals, leaving Gavin, Robin, and Kenneth to hunt and carouse, lord it in the county, and look out for some more willing bride.

Now there ran a certain doggerel legend in the revered annals of Strathmore, which every man, woman, and child of Strathmore blood had believed with awesome belief for generations—something to this effect, as written in obscure characters by one of their ancient seers:

“ When Strathmore May sal wed ayont the Tweed,  
Then down fair Strathmore fa's wi' hellish speed,  
But gif a Strathmore laird win Strathmore bride,  
Then back for aye dour ruin mirk sal bide !”

The curse had fallen on the devoted clan—Lady Rosecleer had married an English lord!

In frenzy, the friends of Strathmore prosperity looked for a Strathmore bride to drive back “dour ruin” again, and thought of the next of kin, who had always lived in Aber-



deen, in comparative obscurity, with grandparents on the maternal side.

Casting about for deliverance, the third son of the house, Tyndale Strathmore, went silently from the highland castle to Aberdeen, told his niece of the misfortune, caused her to overcome obstacles, and bore her up to the savage hills of Sutherlandshire, to dispute the further possession of the title and lands with the recreant Lady Rosecleer.

Thus, having raised a revolt, by providing the maid in the prophecy, they were resolved to hold their own against gay, careless, half-Englified Lady Rosecleer herself, who cared so little about her Highland property that she vowed positively that were it not that she longed to overthrow their silly, heathenish superstitions, and to tease her stupid old Uncle Tyndale, and her three Orsons of kin, she would contentedly wash her hands of gloomy Strathmore and its peat moors for the good of her Lowland cousin, Kilmeny.

So, in the fourth week of sunny July, the new Lady Kilmeny, of Strathmore, came up from the town of Golspic and the stormy Moray Firth in an old-fashioned four-horse chaise, with Tyndale Strathmore sitting by her side, and his three sons, who had gone down to meet them, at her back. And so, in grand state, she entered Strathmore Towers, her hoary possessions, and after being closely scrutinized by the ancient nurse (a grotesque-looking being, and a seer in her way, with an unintelligible accent), who pronounced her a true Strathmore, and kissed her hands, and blessed her head in solemn fashion, Lady Kilmeny betook herself to her private apartments, and locked herself in for days.

Lady Kilmeny was a tall, pale girl, with an uneven temper, and a premonition of insanity in her wild, flashing eyes, if their blaze was not so intelligently accompanied by sarcasm. She came prepared to scorn them all, and, apparently, scorn them she did, right heartily, to judge from her invisibility.

When at last she emerged from the gloomy state chamber, she moved slowly from room to room, eying the strange old-fashioned but gorgeous furniture of the "lady's bowers." She viewed them all with a faintly curling lip, and answered scant to the explanations and legends of the obsequious steward.



"Where is my cousin's portrait?" she suddenly demanded.

"Lady Rosecleer's, my leddy?" said the old retainer, fidgeting about.

"You *know* it is her portrait I mean!" exclaimed Lady Kilmeny.

He drew his bent form up at her tone, so cold and penetrating. Careless Lady Rosecleer, akin though she was, had never cowed him as his new mistress could do by a glance of her proud eye.

"Tyndale Strathmore, your noble kinsman, my leddy, caused it to be put away, when she married wrong, and forgot the key o' the wee tower chamber," he explained at length.

"My kinsman shall keep the keys of his own castle. If I am lady here, I shall see that my keys are mine," cried she, satirically.

Then she strode to one of the long, narrow windows, and stood in the deep embrasure, and cast black, brilliant eyes over the glimmering waves of Dornoch Firth, which washed even to the foundation of her storm-worn tower.

And my lady gazed so long on the sun-kissed waters that they dazzled even her too brilliant eyes, and she turned away with a jerk, as if she had to wrench herself from her reverie; the tears threaded on her heavy lashes.

Lady Kilmeny was provided with a maid of Tyndale Strathmore's own choosing—a Sutherland shepherd's daughter, who had been in the Lowlands, and spoke more intelligibly to the city-bred lady than any other of her surroundings, and this maid, Mysie Carnaigie, robed her mistress every day in cloth of richest web, and starred her hair with iridescent gems, and sang brave songs of Highland glory in her ears, and strove by many a patient art to stir her ambition for the welfare of her clan, and to heighten the burden of her loneliness; yet my lady frowned and pshawed, and turned her back on Mysie Carnaigie, and would not seem content for all her splendor.

But gloom as she would, and scorn as she could, my Lady Kilmeny could not be unlovely. Whatever she did only showed forth the true Strathmore blood, whose proud, heartless bravery brooked no thwarting, for the Strathmores were ever like facts,

"Stubborn child's that downa be disputed."



Strathmore Tower stood on a rocky promontory which ran out some hundred feet into the sea, and its gray walls rose sheer from the churning foam that had lashed in fury there for three centuries or more. The back of the castle was to the Firth, the frowning face looked over a sweet vale of undulating sheep pastures, and blooming heather hills, and golden bloomy knolls.

The tower itself was a huge pile of ancient architecture, with a stone-paved court in front, well locked in from smiling verdure by a high dyke, battle-spiked on top, and pierced through the center by a low door, which, well padlocked and guarded by Strathmore vigilance, was never by any accident opened to the inmates of Strathmore Tower, without the special license of Laird Tyndale, self-constituted regent of the petty kingdom within.

And though Lady Kilmeny had been brought over land and sea to wear away the title, and wrest the lands from her infatuated cousin, and to marry whichever of her three kinsmen could win her first, until possession of these ends was effected, the cunning laird still acted as chief of the clan, and kept certain indulgences in his own power to grant or refuse as his superior wisdom saw fit.

It is needless to say that the high-spirited Lady Kilmeny was not informed of the matrimonial project.

Having tired herself in her climbing from floor to floor of the lofty tower, Lady Kilmeny threw herself wearily on a tapestried couch, grimly carved in ebony gnomes, and gilded with the Strathmore arms, when Tyndale Strathmore was ushered into her presence.

She answered his courtly salutation with a constrained politeness, and waited for him to speak; so, seeing there was no affability to be got from her, the old man took the straight-backed gothic chair she pointed him to, and, placing it near her, he opened his business at once.

He talked on her own matters first, and harangued about her former position and associations, until my lady's darkening face flashed forth her wrath, and with a wild gesture, which made the hard noble quail, she sprang up and towered over him, imperiously commanding him to "leave the past alone—to deal with the present. The present, Laird Tyndale Strathmore! What have you do with my sacred past?" she said.

Then her uncle passed on to the communication he had



been trying to prepare her for, and informed her that Lady Rosecleer's lawyer had written to him, denying the claim of Kilmeny Strathmore to title or estate, and challenging her to prove her right to either.

The laird had written back to the lawyer, in Lady Kilmeny's name, citing a clause in force in the laws of the clan, which disinherited any female who married beyond the border, and passing the title and lands to the next of kin, male or female.

Lord McGillvray Strathmore had been the chief of the house, and the eldest of the three brothers. Lady Rosecleer was his daughter; Colonel William Strathmore was the second brother, and a wild do-nothing, who had joined the army, and lived in Aberdeen when married; Kilmeny, the proud and cold, was *his* daughter; Laird Tyndale, the canny, deeply blooded scion, was the youngest of these three brothers, the patriot for the haughty house, the schemer for its falling power, and the father of Gavin, Robin, and Kenneth, by a noble Strathmore lady, long since dead and in her vaulted tomb.

Under the existing state of things, therefore, Kilmeny Strathmore was indisputably the next in succession, since Lady Rosecleer had openly thrown off the obligations which bound her to her clan, and had, in point of fact, washed her hands of them, and disinherited herself.

These facts were rehearsed to the London lawyer in answer to his first communication. However, he had returned answer that, since the clan dynasty had vanished as completely as the Thanes of yore, these laws made no difference in a matter of lawful and legitimate succession to title and property; and, say what they might, Lady Rosecleer could not be forced to give up her claims without a stronger case being made out. And accordingly the laird had come to break the matrimonial project of Lady Kilmeny, because that, if once married to a Strathmore, he could prove in every law-court in the world a prior right of Lady Kilmeny's, which could not be gainsaid. So spake the Laird Tyndale.

"What right, Sir Tyndale?" demanded Lady Kilmeny, after his vague hinting and discreet half-disclosures.

"Ah! that is a mystery that it would not be politic to explain, even to you, Lady Kilmeny, until things are made generally more secure; until you have a protector that the



law recognizes. Pick you out a husband, my lady, from your own people, and then we can meet Lady Rosecleer and her lawyers on their own ground."

"Am I to marry a son of yours, then, and thus prop up the fortunes of Strathmore?" asked my lady, looking straight at him.

He hesitated; then, provoked by the continued attention she gave his uneasy countenance, bowed silently.

"I will not litigate with Lady Rosecleer on such conditions," said she, coldly. "You need expect nothing of this kind from me."

"I beg you to reconsider," he exclaimed, in consternation. "I assure you upon my sacred honor that you are the heiress of McGillvray, Lord of Strathmore. It is no quibble I propose."

"I will stoop to nothing," she said again, with icy lips; "nothing, my good Laird Tyndale, that, in my humble obscurity, I would not have stooped to do. I refuse to dispute with my cousin without a legal and honorable right; and, if you please, do not hamper my liberty by any matrimonial engagements. I enjoy my freedom better."

She got up with a little laugh, which hurt the laird somehow more than tears would have done. He looked hard at her lithe form as she stood at a window, with her back to him, and her white face set to the blue main; and if visions of crushing that imperious creature into submission had animated him, those visions were now slipping away very fast, as he studied closely his lady-niece.

"A winsome lady, truly!" he mused, "and a brave queen for dowie Strathmore—but what a spirit!"

He retired to deliberate on the position she had taken, and to gather his counselors together.

Presently when he was in the court he heard her light step behind him, and starting round to see what my lady meant, she swooped across the cold flag to him, and laid a slight, detaining hand on his arm.

"Sir, do not go to law with my cousin in my name, or in my interest—I forbid you to do so," said Lady Kilmeny, most earnestly.

He shifted the little hand between his own and held it there.

"My lassie, it's an awful necessity to wrest the property from Lady Rosecleer," he answered, with great agitation.



“Have ye so little care for your doomed house that ye canna even mind the prophecy? Will ye no bend this lily hand, my May—Kilmeny, to save your heritage from the Doom—the Doom?”

The last word was almost a cry; stout Larid Tyndale Strathmore was very pale and his eyes glinted wildly.

She only looked her incredulity and waited for more.

Standing by the little door with his cap off as if he was speaking of a sacred subject, he related the weird legend I have before written, and showed forth how Lady Rosecleer had brought the case down upon Strathmore, and that Lady Kilmeny could be the only savior to rescue it from utter destruction.

My lady listened with pained countenance.

“Do you believe all this?” asked she, slowly.

“Ah, Kilmeny Strathmore, well may I believe it; the very fact of a stranger possessing our ancient lands has come bitter as a curse on us already. When I vouch for your right to be what we would make you, will you not save us?”

“Tell me the right.”

“I dare not, you must wait, Kilmeny.”

“And I dare not put myself in a false position, Tyndale Strathmore,” said she steadily. “I understood differently when you brought me to Strathmore Tower; you said I was the only heir.”

“So you are, Lady Kilmeny—the only heir we will own.”

“I will not usurp my kinswoman’s place. Let me go free.”

He dropped her hand in anger, and turned to unlock the little door.

“Tell me I may have Strathmore,” pleaded she again, clasping her hands, with a new humility in her mien.

He paused—the key in his hand—looked at her and laughed sarcastically.

“Do you want to go back to them all, *puir bairn*?” sneered the laird.

She threw up her head, her wild, black eyes flashing, and paced the narrow court like a young lioness. At last she curbed her emotion, and pacing quite up to him, forced a smile, and held out her hand:

“Forgive the thought,” she uttered, in a low, clear tone, “I shall never covet liberty for the weak reasons you ascribe



to me. I am done with the past. Yet give me the key if I am lady here."

She held out her hand with a cool, assured gesture—with *such* a Strathmore loveliness in her noble face, that her charmed uncle could scarce forbear giving her all she asked; but inborn policy prevailed, and he kept cautious possession of the key, preferring friendly promises to acts.

"My lady, I beg you will not set your mind on having this wicket opened. You may go all over Sutherland, but it must be under my protection."

"Sir Tyndale, am I a prisoner here?" asked Lady Kilmeny, patiently.

"A prisoner! My dear niece you are the mistress of everything you see!"

"Then give me a mistress' power. I shall send for you when I wish to rule by proxy. I object to be locked within my kingdom."

He could no longer stand her direct sarcasm; without daring a word, he passed through the door, locked it, and handed the key to the porter, who stood outside, mounted his horse and galloped off.

A few days afterward the laird's three sons rode over from their residence, which was half castle, half-hunting lodge, to make the further acquaintance of their lady cousin.

She had to be exhumed from her lonely state-chamber, where she was, as usual, locked up, and after keeping them impatiently standing about the wide, dismal banquetting hall for half an hour, came gliding in like a ghost, and startled them with her noiseless step and white face.

Major Gavin Strathmore, the eldest of the trio, was neither more nor less than a heavy dragoon, who had served abroad with distinction, and had come home on furlough, perhaps a few weeks ago. He was stupid and admiring, and Lady Kilmeny looked away from him to the next.

Kenneth was a noble-looking fellow, whose intellectual expression invited longer attention. He had been through the Edinburgh University, and was a student, a poet, and a dreamer. He meditated taking orders, if ever the active incentive should come to move him.

Lady Kilmeny sighed, and turned to her youngest cousin. And Robin, with his yellow hair blown in bronze masses over his brown brow, and his wide, blue eyes fastened on her, chewed the silky tops of his beard.



Robin was neither soldier nor scholar, and had never crossed Dornoch Firth, nor roamed out of sight of the Benmore of Assynt; but he was mighty in boating, fishing, deer-hunting, and good-fellowship, in scaling mountains, and horse-racing, in winning the rough fishermen's hearts, and in flirting with the apple-cheeked, azure-eyed belles of Golspie village.

And withal, a freer hand or a more single heart never gave friendly grip or beat for fair fame than gallant Robin Strathmore's; and Lady Kilmeny eyed him long, and turned away her head to smile bitterly.

"Does my lady—aw—Cousin Kilmeny—hem—like Strathmore Tower?" quoth stupid Gavin, marshaling in civilities.

"I have great cause to like it, cousin major!" breathed the lady's curling lips.

"If you would tell us any of your tastes or favorite pursuits," said Kenneth, gently, "there's not one of us but would do his utmost to amuse you in your lonely state."

"Ha! Cousin Kenneth," she ejaculated, with a curious self-disclaim, "you shall teach me oblivion; you shall show me Lethe's stream, that I may drink, and sleep forever. And if——"

"I'll show you something better," interrupted Robin, with small ceremony. "You shall learn to shoot game, and ride through rough woods. I've always heard my Cousin Kilmeny was a sickly lass, but, faith, she's only fit for a winding-sheet. What's wrong with you?" demanded bold Robin, standing over her.

"Will you—will you do that?" cried Lady Kilmeny, with bell-like voice. "Then, Robin, I'll go with you. I'll be as happy as I can with you. Oh, don't look distrustful," she said to the other two, who glanced at each other; "I'm not going to beat an ignominious retreat, and I'm not going to run off with Cousin Robin; so spare your jealousy, gentlemen. But, oh, to drink in the free, salt breeze, and to wade in unimprisoned fields of clover, and to think I am again a little child in summer prime—oh! oh!"

Lady Kilmeny was pacing to and fro, murmuring this rapidly and incoherently, as if she had forgotten their presence. She clasped her hands in momentary ecstasy at her concluding interjections; then they fell apart, her arms hung dejectedly, her head drooped.



“Ah, me!” she sighed, almost inaudibly; “summer might have been sweet to me! Can I dare to think of sweetness now?”

She left them abruptly, and did not appear anon, as they expected, but, with unwonted politeness, sent down Mysie to invite them to refresh themselves ere they departed.

Certainly, my lady was not fond of conquest.

The three were clanking about the chilly hall, talking about her, when she tripped down the stairs again to them, a long cloak fastened at her throat, her bonnet on her head.

“Is Cousin Robin waiting for me?” cried the bell-like voice.

“What? You’re going out?” exclaimed the nonplused cavalier.

“Yes, with you. Sha’n’t I be well guarded?”

“My Lady Kilmeny,” grumbled rough Gavin, “’tis not for dainty dames like you to foot it, with stalwart men, among the peat moors.”

“You say I’m fit for a winding sheet,” cried my lady, blazing up. “Well, blame deadly Strathmore prison, if I die for want of heaven’s air.”

“You *shall* go!” said Robin, with melting mood. “You’ll never die, by locking up, my bonnie May.”

And she went, as she had fully intended, when she first saw their faces; and as my willful lady always seemed to have had her own way.

Gavin, Kenneth, and Robin Strathmore followed in her train, as meek and pliant as servitors ought to be; and, scornfully laughing at them, she passed through the reticent gate, now open for the first time, to release her from her grandeur.

The lovely vale was gemmed with gowans and buttercups, and the clouds threw fleeting shadows, wave-like, over the golden grain that lined the valley slopes, and my lady drank in through eyes and parted lips the loveliness and the odors, and trembled in every limb; and as they strolled slowly along the river-bank, their backs to the sea, she melted to womanly playfulness for Robin Strathmore, and drew sudden shouts from all the simple three by her sharp-edged wit.

She sent Major Gavin a mile up the height for a cluster of ruby fruit which she admired on a rock above her; she



sent the gratified Kenneth back to Strathmore Tower for her parasol—"he was to bring it in his own hands;" but she only asked a little favor of Robin—to climb a tiny bramble knoll, and bring her the wild roses clustered on its crown.

And no sooner had Robin sprung three steps from her side than, measuring with eager eyes the distance between herself and a shepherd down the valley, my Lady Kilmeny fled like a fawn toward him, faintly hailing him to come to her.

But the little bird might as easily flutter into free ether out of one of Robin's bird snares as my lady hope to escape his eye. In a moment he was at her side, his arm thrown round her panting form, his hand drawing a letter from her trembling clutch.

"My lady, is this honorable?" questioned Robin, sternly.

"Oh, let me send it! See—it is only to a woman!" she whispered, with mournful appeal.

He would not look at the address.

"I am not your inquisitor, Kilmeny Strathmore," replied he, angrily; "only tell me that it is not a letter relinquishing everything to Lady Rosecleer."

"No, Robin."

"Then, by heaven, you shall send it, my bird! Here, McBain!" and the gallant young hunter gave it to the shepherd, with directions to mail it at Golspie immediately; and as he shuffled away to his hut, to send one of many heather-headed juveniles to tend his sheep, proud Lady Kilmeny clasped her cousin's arm with her two sweet hands, and said:

"Heaven bless you, Robin!"

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## CHAPTER IX.

### A LIGHT FROM THE PAST.

Yes, the captain was changed; this catastrophe had seriously unnerved him; his buoyant, sanguine temperament seemed to have received a death-blow, and he was no longer the same man.

His bright blue eyes were clouded with an habitual gloom



and unrest; his cheery smile came rarely now, and his gay, enthusiastic spirit had changed to one of silent vigil and austerity. Even his present position beneath the wavering beeches expressed mightily the secret influence of that baleful sorrow. The downcast attitude, the head leaning dejectedly upon the gnarled tree root, the anxious, abstracted gaze over the sunnily flecked leaves, the indifferent air with which he slowly puffed his favorite Havana—all bespoke Anthony Drummond as a changed man.

“And all since that one day, too,” thought Mrs. Ellathorne, as she watched him from the window. “He did not seem so discouraged until the day they gave up the search. He’s been so different since—so morose and gloomy.”

Mrs. Ellathorne’s soliloquy was here interrupted by her seeing the captain turn his eyes toward the avenue gate; then rise slowly and pitch his cigar into a tulip plantation, and walk away hurriedly across the lawn and through the trees at the end, into the “high garden” (so called from its high stone wall), whose gate he shut behind him with a clang.

Presently the lady heard a step in the gravel, and rising to look, she beheld Alexander Buccleugh.

“Come in, come in, Alexander,” said Mrs. Ellathorne, meeting him on the portal, with kindly eyes and welcoming face. “We’re lonely enough here, and you are worse in Dowie Denburn. Come in and stay with us this evening; you’re just from the Bank?”

“No, I have not been at the Bank to-day,” answered the young man, sitting down and slowly wiping his pale, weary face with his handkerchief.

“Poor fellow!” sighed his friend, looking at him, sorrowfully. “Business doesn’t bring much comfort to you.”

“I was over at Dysart again to-day,” said Alexander Buccleugh, speaking out of a reverie.

Mrs. Ellathorne turned from him, shaking her head.

“What is the use, Alexander,” she repeated. “You have been there three times now, and to no purpose; you have been wandering about day after day, neglecting your business, and wearing your energies down, in vain, aimless searching. What do you expect, Alexander? Do you believe our poor girl could be within Edinburgh, or its environs, and not come home to the family? You are doing her an injustice by your expectations.”



"It's not Glencora; it's the clew—the *clew*!" muttered Alexander, clasping his brow between his hands. "How can I rest in peace while those officers waste their time in silly investigations? And my girlie, my bride——"

Here he broke down, and bitter, scalding tears forced themselves between his clenched fingers. He turned away, and bowed his head upon the window sash.

"Whist—whist, my boy!" said Mrs. Ellathorne, laying her hand on his arm, with a trembling, eager gesture. "God knows, your heart is o'erladen enough; but you do no good by this pining after her. Be advised by me, Alexander; wait and see—wait, as Anthony is doing."

"And what is *he* waiting for?" said Alexander, chafing. "Is it to lose the last chance that activity might have brought us?"

Mrs. Ellathorne sighed.

"Truly, Alexander, I don't rightly understand the captain's mind myself," she said. "He was not wont to lay down his oars when the breakers were roaring; but I know he has reason for this waiting. He always says he is 'biding his time.'"

"Where's Florice?" Alexander asked.

"She went over to Nurse McGowan's this afternoon, intending to lighten her loneliness somewhat. She's down with the rheumatism, poor body, you know."

"And Jessie?"

"I wonder you did not meet her; she went into town about an hour since on some little business. You'll stay with us this evening?"

"No, Mrs. Ellathorne, I have not come to stay to-night. I—in fact I am going to Aberdeen to-night, and may stay away some little time. May I see the captain? I thought I saw him on the lawn, as I entered the gate. Where has he gone?"

"I'll send for Anthony; he's in the high garden."

Mrs. Ellathorne stepped to the door, called up a servant, and dispatched her with the message, and turned again with a distressed face to her visitor.

"Why should you go to Aberdeen? Oh, Alexander, be guided by me," she entreated; "it's an ill life to lead, this wild chasing after nothing. Wait until there is some sort of trail to follow; then, *at it* with a fresh heart!"



Alexander's face flushed, his right hand clenching vehemently.

"Mrs. Ellathorne," he said, slowly and sternly, "I have suffered perhaps the bitterest pang a man can suffer, and live—the utter spoiling of every heart-hope—just when its perfection was mine; my life and my strength were bound up in that girl—my faith in her was absolute—my love for her to all eternity. And now, Mrs. Ellathorne, when she has been torn from the very arms which in a few hours more would have had the right to guard her from all the world—now my life is a blank—my existence is superfluity—unless spent in her service. My friend, I will never wait—never rest—never cease my quest, until I have found either my promised wife—or vengeance. I have said!"

Standing with his head crested, his blue eyes gazing upward to the sky, his right hand pointing to a vignette oil-painting of his own vanished bride, smiling graciously down upon him—he looked like some devotee of old, swearing by the shrine of his Madonna to lay his life at her feet; and as his friend listened and looked, a trust—steadfast and unfathomable—entered her soul; a trust in this man, a sure belief in his integrity.

A shadow passed the window, and presently Captain Drummond entered, throwing his hat upon a chair.

The captain's fearless, open face was cloudy and doubtful; he returned his visitor's salutation with a stern kind of abruptness; then as suddenly caught the offered hand, and gripped it cordially.

"Good-day to you, Buccleugh man," he cried; "you're not looking well. What's the matter now?"

"Nothing more than usual, captain," answered Alexander, subsiding into his normal state of calm and gloom. "Men don't thrive on my mental fare, would you think? I've just called in, captain, to speak to you about my next move. That Forsyth man has been preying on my mind for the last few days. Who's to know that he is a perfectly innocent party? Anyhow, I'm off to Aberdeen by to-night's train to see for myself. I have doubts as to those detectives' efficiency."

"To Aberdeen, hey?" cried the captain, quickly and suspiciously. "Buccleugh, are you sure that you intend to come back?"

Alexander seemed not to notice his friend's cool tones.



He gazed drearily up at Glencora's fair, unconscious face smiling down upon him. "Faith!" he said, with a bitter laugh, "if I don't hear of her there, I scarcely care whether I come back or not. Edinburgh is hateful to me."

Captain Drummond stared at him hard, his cloudy brow wavering between conflicting opinions. At last he sprang up and grasped his friend's hand. "I wish to God!" he cried, and then he cooled; "I wish, Buccleugh," he soberly concluded, "that we knew which were friends and which were foes in this unhappy business. 'Twould be an awful thing to pitch on the wrong man."

"I'll find the right man," smiled Alexander, grimly. "I am going to hunt up and down the earth until I find the right man."

Drummond hastily turned away, and, with a lowering brow, turned his back upon the avenger, thus boldly announcing himself. But then, while his great heart was swelling and burning with its secret repression of dark thoughts, his eyes moistened with a starting tear, as Florice—wan-faced, sweet-faced Florice—tripped across the lawn, with her basket on her arm, and up the steps. She put down the basket when she saw Alexander, and came to his side with a tender, wistful confidence of a favorite sister.

"Well, dear Alexander," she murmured, "you haven't been in to see us these three days, and why?"

"I've been away, Florice; I've been away from Denburn," answered the young man, smoothing her brown hair with gentle hands, "and I'm going away again. Bid me Heaven's speed on my journey, Florice."

"I will, but I fear——" She stopped, and her bosom heaved with fast coming fears. Those little excursions no longer inspired her with excited anticipations of success. They seemed but an assurance of the lost one's evil fate. "I fear to have you disappointed again," she contrived to say.

How intently Captain Drummond watched the two, as they thus spoke together! He leaned forward in his chair, and his hands clutched its arms, as his eyes traveled from face to face, and studied each change discernible in Alexander's. Who could tell what vehement emotions were surging through his heart? Not Mrs. Ellathorne, though heretofore she had read her brother's frank soul like sunbeams in a shallow brook.



Why did his brow darken when Alexander bent over the little Florice to touch her brow with his lips? He seemed unkind to Alexander of late. Then why did his face flush, and his lips tremble, as he sprang impulsively to his feet and cried:

"Go then, Alexander, go man, and God speed you! I *will* believe you are doing your best, honestly and fairly."

The two men griped each other's hands—one with flushed, distressed, wistful glances; the other with a calm, open look of friendship and farewell.

"Good-by, Mrs. Ellathorne," quoth Alexander, with a kindly pressure of her hand. "Good-by, Florice; keep up a good, brave heart, dear girlie. If I meet Jessie in the lane, I'll bid her good-by myself; if I don't, you will for me, Florice."

And then he went away without a backward look, and soon left Lady-Bank behind him, and Captain Drummond strode to the window and stared after him until he was out of sight, and then he stared at a shimmering white orchis, down the leafy vista, with blank, questioning, gloomy eyes, and his face became stern and hard.

When, perhaps, about fifteen minutes of his reverie had passed, he was recalled by a little hand touching lightly his clenched fingers; then a soft little palm slid into his loosening fingers.

"Have you nothing to say to Florice to-night?"

"Nothing to say? Yes, my girlie, yes," with a long, heavy sigh. "Come here and sit by me while I tell you what I'm going to say."

The sun was sinking low, and slant rays of mellow gold glimmered in through the honeysuckle wreaths, and the two were alone, in the radiant effulgence.

"Girlie, you would confide everything to me—would you not?"

The white little face of Florice looked up into his, tender and sweet in the gentle ray.

"Everything, Anthony."

"Why, dearest, because you trust me?"

"Yes, guardie, that is why."

"And you know that, next to the cause of Right, your happiness is most precious to me?"

"I truly believe it, Anthony."

The sweet little love-lesson is over; the pupil has learned



it well. Still, the master wavers and hesitates; there's a harder lesson coming; there are questions which he shrinks from, but cannot evade.

"Girlye," begins Captain Drummond, at last, with her head held to his breast by his broad hand, "do you ever remember your sister and Buccleugh having a quarrel—a disagreement about anything?"

The wondering little face was lifted up, and Florice looked at him in dismay.

"Does my promise to be open and true to you extend so far as that would extend?"

"Girlye, it does—it does! *Was* there a quarrel?"

"There *was*, Anthony. But I cannot tell even you what I was not authorized to disclose either by Glencora or Alexander."

"Tell me, I adjure you, Florice!" he exclaimed, straining her closer, while his heart beat with ungovernable excitement. "Tell me, for the love of your lost sister—for the love of purity and truth! Tell me, for the love of Heaven, Florice, all you know about any quarrel between Glencora and Alexander Buccleugh!"

"It was completely made up since, guardie. Need I tell of an old love difference?"

"It may bring her back to your side, Florice, to tell it now."

"Anthony, if it was my own fault, I would confess all to you; but another's——"

"Oh, Florice! Florice! how can you say you trust me?"

"I do, guardie, absolutely and completely! After all, why should I hesitate? This disagreement only redounds to Alexander's honor, and I must say poor Glencora was a little too proud. About six months ago, you know, Alexander was across to Ayr, seeing about his cousin Jessie's property, which she had just come into. She was twenty-one last January, and her mamma hasn't much idea about business, as Alexander has always had to manage all for them. You know, when he returned, he brought Jessie with him, to introduce her to us, and, as she soon became very fond of Glencora, they were quite intimate together. How it happened, I can't exactly remember. But we were all sitting in Nurse McGowan's one afternoon, and she left us, to run across the meadows for milk from Farmer Brownrigg's, to make us drink, when Jessie began talking



about how she came into her heirship; how such great wealth became hers, and she laughingly said:

“ ‘If Miss Calvert had not proved so charming, I would only have been half as rich.’

“Glencora asked, in astonishment, for an explanation.

“ ‘Is it possible,’ cried Jessie, ‘that my Cousin Alexander is so noble as never to mention the sacrifice he has made for your sake?’

“ ‘I have heard of no sacrifice,’ answered my sister, quite seriously.

“ ‘Then Jessie Buccleugh told how her whimsical uncle divided his fortune equally between his nephew and niece, on condition that they married each other.

“ ‘But,’ said Jessie, laughing, ‘as my uncle was a virulent old bachelor, and knew nothing about such things, he thought to make his money-match sure, by giving me all the fortune, should my knight prove errant. Of course, it just happened as stupid old know-nothing might have known. Alexander was the dearest and kindest of cousins, always taking care of mamma and me, and managing mamma’s little property for her like a son, but never dreaming of becoming one. I think at one time he did get up the intention to begin considering the question, but just then the Aberdeen branch of his bank sent him as manager here, and he bought Denburn, and—met his affinity, as the story-books say, which means that he fell in love, as only a noble, high-minded, single-hearted gentleman would ever do, with you, my beautiful friend, and never even mentioned the seventy thousand pounds he was giving up for your sake.’

“ ‘When Jessie finished this, she threw her arms round Glencora and burst into tears.

“ ‘Oh, my dear friend!’ she cried, in her queer little innocent way, ‘you have got the purest of men to be your slave! May you only be as good as you are lovely, for Alexander is worthy of perfection!’

“ ‘I now remarked, with a little alarm, that Glencora’s face was quite pale, as if the disclosure just made was an exceedingly painful one to her, and I knew enough of her lofty, dignified spirit, at times, to fear the manner in which she would take it. She looked in Jessie’s face, and asked steadily:



“ ‘Did Mr. Buccleugh act honorably toward you, Jessie, to violate the contract thus made?’

“ ‘Oh, yes, indeed,’ cried Jessie, vehemently; ‘he made no promise whatever, and broke none, but has been a most generous protector to me all his life. Why should he be blamed for not loving me?’

“ ‘But *you*, Jessie—has he been generous to your feelings?’ insisted Glencora.

“And here Jessie burst out laughingly through her tears, and said:

“ ‘Will it do, sweet cousin mine, that is to be, to declare that I’ve never had a heart-pang in my life, and that I’m proud and honored to know that the man whom I revere above all other men on earth, has won the heart of the loveliest girl I ever saw?’

“Well you know, Anthony, how proud and haughty Glencora could be when her blood was up. I could never quite understand her then; it seemed as if she was lifted above my head by some cause invisible to me, and at such times I often wondered how we came to be of the same stock; and she took this announcement of Alexander sacrificing his wealth for her very bitterly to heart, although she finally strove to conceal her feelings.

“Just then we saw Alexander coming through the lane to join us in the cottage, and Jessie, still laughing, and not believing in Glencora’s real displeasure, went to the door and cried out to him:

“ ‘Come, old cousin, there’s a fair lady here wants a certain knight to sound his own trumpet to her. Come and tell her the story of the legacy!’

“Then she ran fleetly past him, laughing merrily, and continued through the meadow until she met the nurse.

“I don’t think Glencora would have mentioned her cause of anger to Alexander if Jessie had not called his attention to it, but when he came up to her, and in his usual open, unsuspecting way addressed her, she suddenly turned white with extreme emotions, refused him her hand, and walked with him down through his own grounds into the shrubbery.

“I thought it was the most fortunate thing that could have happened that she should meet Alexander then, for I remember, though she was lofty and imperious as a queen, when she considered an injustice to have been done to anybody, yet she was always the first to succumb before integ-



grity, and the most open to forgiveness, and reconciliation of any one I ever saw; and I also put full trust in Alexander's power over her affections, so when I saw her again, about two hours after, I put the extreme gravity and silence which enveloped her merely to the score of one of her fits of penitence, and forbore to question her, as I knew she would confide all to me in her own good time.

"You know, guardie, the next morning Jessie returned home to Ayr, and I accompanied her, to spend the winter, and the first letter Glencora wrote me gave me the deepest surprise and grief. She told me that Alexander and she had disagreed upon a slight subject; that her trust in him was shaken, and she would never marry a man who could lightly wear a woman's heart; a new one displaced by the old. That was all she said upon the subject, except to request me to make no mention of the estrangement to Jessie, as she might blame herself for being the indirect cause, 'and attempt to patch up a reconciliation,' my sister said, which in her present state of feeling would be but a hollow pretense. I cannot tell what sorrow that letter caused me, but I told my grief to no one, only strove hard in all my letters to Glencora to preach moderation and forgiveness. She took not the slightest notice of my entreaties, except now and then to take occasion to thank me for my warm interest, and gradually the subject died out between us. Judge, then, of my joyful surprise, when in May she wrote, 'Alexander and Glencora are once more one in heart; they propose to become one in name in July, and they would like their dear Florice home immediately, to participate in their happiness.' You know well, guardie, how happy we have all been since then; nothing but the most perfect love existed, or seemed to exist between Alexander and Glencora. I remember how dear Alexander told me, the evening after my happy return home, how Glencora had held out like a true empress, as she was in nature, against the shadow of injustice in her devoted subject.

"'She'd never have yielded one jot of her high-souled ideas,' cried Alexander, 'if she hadn't heard a rumor of an attachment between cousin Jessie and some nice young woer from Ayr, and all on a sudden I surprised her sweet soul into sudden passion, and she melted into her lover's arms at last, my own beautiful, pure Glennie again.'

"I was so contented in their perfect reunion, that I



laughingly declared my sister should never hear from me, whether Jessie had accepted or rejected her Ayrshire admirer, and Alexander laughed, too, at that, but didn't ask me either. And after that all went on smoothly and lovingly until—well, perhaps, I need not mention it."

"Until what, Florice?"

The captain had listened all through this commonplace tale with the most intense interest; his face was pale, his manner depressed.

"Until what, girlie?" he breathed again.

"Until the Tuesday before the wedding, about eleven o'clock, the mantua-maker came with two dresses which Glencora was to fit on, and send back for the trimmings. None of us could find her, for she had gone down the avenue with Alexander, who was on his way to his business, about half an hour before. I ran up to the dressing-room for my hat, which I knew was on the table there, intending to go and look for her, but to my surprise, I found her in a very unexpected manner. She was lying on the couch, with her face buried in the cushions, sobbing violently, and her desk was before her, with a note half written lying upon it."

"A note, Florice?" repeated the captain, huskily.

"Yes, guardie, a few words commenced on a sheet. When I saw her I screamed and ran forward to console her. 'What has happened, sister?' I cried. She raised herself and looked at me with what I thought a deeply remorseful look through her tears."

"'Nothing, Florice, dear,' she answered me. 'I am going to put it right presently.'"

"So saying, she composed herself, drew the desk toward her, and dashed off a few more lines, kissed the name half-playfully, half-sorrowfully, and directed it. I made sure that it was some little love token between her and Alexander, so I was watching her with admiring pleasure.

"'Now, sister, I am going to ask something of you,' she said, with a tremulous smile which somehow gave my heart pain to see on a bride-elect.

"'I'll do anything, Glencora, darling,' I said, trying not to cry, 'only don't—don't suffer grief so near your wedding-day, or I shall think you are regretting it.'

"She kissed me on the brow tenderly, and smiled more cheerily.



“‘Never think that, Florice,’ she said, ‘and don’t fret your loyal little heart over my petty sorrows—they are of my own making. Florice, I want you to say nothing about the silly exhibition I have made—the friends down stairs would think by far too much of a trifle that is past. Now run down, and I’ll compose myself and be with the mantua-maker immediately. I’ll come in five minutes.’

“I was leaving the room but she called me back with sudden eagerness.

“‘Oh, Florice,’ she cried, ‘has the post bag gone out of the hall?’

“I told her no, that it wasn’t half past eleven yet, and the boat had not gone down, then I joined them below, and in a few minutes Glencora came in as serene as ever, and seemed more than usually kind and sweet all day, and when the evening came, and Alexander came back from town, I felt quite sure of their heartfelt confidence in each other, by the way in which he greeted her, and drew her with him down the avenue, to speak to her alone.”

There was a long silence after this relation.

The dark was imperceptibly creeping in, and Florice suffered her head still to lie on the captain’s breast imprisoned by his hand.

That hand had grown cold, and the beating heart seemed almost to creep in muffled throbs, so indistinct had become its pulsations.

Was suspicion becoming assurance? Captain Drummond looked down at the quiet face of his little Florice ere the last glimmer of departing twilight vanished to ethereal gloom, and he found it a very sweet, brave face, with all its wan pensiveness—a face that he could safely trust for goodness and for wisdom.

“Florice,” he whispered, “they say that a pure woman always has an instinctive knowledge of the character of the men she meets. Tell me, then my girlie, if you wholly believe in Alexander Buccleugh?”

The young girl started from his sheltering arm, and stood looking down at him with a flushing cheek.

“Never breathe a doubt of Alexander!” she cried, spiritedly and vehemently. “I have that instinctive knowledge of him that I would trust him. Anthony, I would trust him in the face of any temptation to retain his manhood and his honor gloriously unsullied. Glencora may



have erred. I know she was proud and impulsive, and very intemperate in a noble way, always sacrificing herself first, and I fear she did him injustice, as well as herself, in that quarrel, and in those tears, but he, solemnly I could swear it, Anthony, he was blameless."

"Girlye, I wish I could believe with you."

Florice turned pale and regarded him fixedly.

"I will be Alexander's friend through all dangers," she said, with a glittering eye, "and those who strike at my lost sister's betrothed, strike at my heart's warm blood. Anthony, I warn you!"

Trembling, she turned away, and the captain's swelling love for her strove hard with darker emotions.

"I'll bide my time," he muttered. "I'll not be rash, but wait for assurance."

And then lights were carried in, and Mrs. Ellathorne entered and glanced at the grave guardian on the sofa, and the silent ward between the lace curtains of the window, with a comprehending look, and then an airy rustle was heard, and softly, with the heavy dew upon her golden hair and muslin robes, Jessie Buccleugh came tripping in, and the circle was complete.

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## CHAPTER X.

### THE ROSE IN BLOOM.

Immortal music filled the air, crowds pressed forward—crowds that blazed into scarlet and gold at their edges; banners waved over the surging mass, and fair hands cast votive, floral showers all adown the chain-guarded Queen's Drive that wound at the feet of the Salisbury Craigs. Yet, swayed as the murmuring throngs might, all faces turned toward one point—that point St. Margaret's Railway Station.

The queen was on her way from Osborne to Balmoral, and meant to pass one night at her palace of Holyrood, in Edinburgh; hence the general holiday in the leal town, and the motley concourse in the Queen's Park.

There was a little group standing somewhat apart from the general throng, who gazed with the rest down the white, winding drive at their feet, to St. Margaret's Station.



There waited Florice Calvert and Jessie Buccleugh, each supported on the arm of Harold Russel. His open carriage, in which he had attended them from Lady-Bank, stood in the park at a little distance from them, while they, having walked to a slight eminence of St. Anthony's Well, obtained a clearer view of the coming pageant.

Florice walked by her friends almost silently, but Miss Buccleugh and Mr. Russel talked together, he at least with keen enjoyment. Why he loved this brusque sprite I do not know; certainly it was not because he had ever received encouragement to do so, for surely a more obtuse inamorata never overlooked man's homage.

The few weeks that had passed since Florice had told that little history to Captain Drummond, had drawn them into full-lapped September; but, ah! what barren harvesting was theirs! Each of these there at St. Anthony's Well had felt the impress of the summer days, and which of them bore other fruit than bitter apples of Sodom?

Harold Russel is no longer heart-whole, for he loves, and knows not whether such love will be his blessing or his curse; Jessie's smiles are fitful beams, that carry nothing of dawning hope for him. She is anxious, she is suffering, her spirits effervesce with foamy unsubstantiality, and sink to cold flatness; and young Florice droops with paler grace, her plaintive eyes replete with repressed consciousness of bereavement, the new and pricking sense of Anthony's injustice.

For her beloved guardian still waits, in mysterious patience, some unknown disclosure, and still questions, in mysterious distrust, the good faith of Glencora's lover; and the generous heart of little Florice swells with sorrow and reproach at the outrage.

Alexander had not returned to Edinburgh. With a pitiful persistence, he wandered to every conceivable place where the ghost of a hope could be traced. The detectives were at fault; if they worked at all, they worked in fruitless secrecy.

Florice was aroused from her reverie by a loud, enthusiastic cheer.

Queen Victoria rode on her way, turning her gracious countenance from side to side, and wherever she fixed her blue eye, "God save the Queen!" would burst from the most undemonstrative lips.



The queen's guards pranced before her and behind her; the lords and gentlemen of her waiting pressed around the royal carriage, where she sat with serene security, her consort by her side. Then followed the carriage with the queen's children, the Princess Royal and the Prince of Wales, smiling, chatting, and bowing to the people; and after them the carriage of the queen's ladies in waiting, four dames of noble birth.

Florice trembles with excitement as her majesty passes, glancing up at the little group by the famous Well, and inclining her head to them, in reply to Jessie's fluttering handkerchief and Harold's lifted hat. Florice gazes after that benignant face and the gracious smile of the beloved Prince Consort as long as she may see them, and then she glances at the third carriage.

And when her eye fastens on its occupants, the noble ladies of honor, her white face flushes a tingling crimson, her eyes dilate with amazed rapture, her lips seek vainly to articulate; she clings with both hands to Harold Russell's arm; she shakes him in frenzy, and points to the slowly passing carriage.

And Harold looks down, and Jessie looks down; and Jessie screams, in a piercing voice, that is drowned in martial music, and clanging bells, and hoarse huzzahs:

“Glencora! Glencora!”

And the four ladies of honor glance, like their royal mistress, from side to side, in the faces of the people, and the pageant winds proudly by, and the band marches, with blazoning music, after; and Florice is kneeling by St. Anthony's Well, with shaking hands outstretched, with wild face, appealing in vain.

Yes, Glencora's image passed before their eyes—Glencora's beautiful self, prouder, more majestic than ever, with never a cloud on that sunny brow to tell of a heart within. She has passed, all fair, and seeming happy, and her sister, her forgotten sister, breaking into a paroxysm of hysterical grief, has to be half-carried by Harold Russell down to his carriage, Jessie following, with steps that never felt the ground.

Sitting in the carriage, her head on Jessie's shoulder, her strength of mind wildly striving to retain its sway; the throngs gradually dispersing or galloping in equestrian ardor along the royal route, the crashing, exultant “Queen's



March" fading into gentle harmony; then Harold Russell ventured to speak to Florice.

"Miss Florice," said he, gravely, "have you anything to advise—any course of conduct to suggest?"

A quick thrill of agony shot through Florice's heart; must she propose to pursue her sister into the garish splendor of her mysterious exaltation, and sue her to return to the humble station she had forsaken for that splendor?

"I have nothing to say; come home to guardie," moaned Florice.

Harold averted a stern face from the sight of Florice's anguish.

"Shall we go to Holyrood, and demand the restoration of Miss Calvert?" said he.

Quick, Jessie Buccleugh struck in:

"No one can claim Miss Calvert—she is twenty-four. Leave her alone. If she is our Glencora of old, she will come of her own accord to Lady-Bank; if she is not—if her desertion was voluntary—shall *we* force her to return to insult the hearts she has outraged?"

Yet bitter as were the words, her voice shook, her pitiful hands grasped the strained hands of Florice, her spirit died within her.

"Oh, heartless Glencora! better you were dead than thus found!" thought Jessie, her heart sinking like lead as she remembered Alexander.

They drove home in bitter silence.

When Mrs. Ellathorne came to the door to meet the young ladies, and saw in their troubled faces a reflection of the shock they had endured, she cried, in instant prescience of misfortune.

"What now, Florice? What have you heard?"

Florice caught her by the arm.

"Send for guardie, quick, Mrs. Ellathorne. We've seen ——" the word died on her lips—she might not trust herself to tell the tale that would influence the minds of her friends so justly against her sister.

Mrs. Ellathorne, gazing vividly at that white face with its lights of sweet relief, and shadows of perplexed anguish, gathered a blessed moiety of the truth; she pressed her hand to her throbbing bosom, and tears rained down the livid cheeks.

"Heaven be praised!" she cried, nearly stifled with rap-



ture—"my winsome lassie is no dead, but alive and well!" and she hurried to the library, where the moody captain, in distrustful seclusion, pored over Alexander's last hopeless letter.

"Anthony," said his sister, tremulously, "come here, Florice has come home with news."

He had only to look at her, and he thrust the letter into his desk, and followed her to the parlor, where stood the three, silent and doubtful.

Harold Russell met the captain's penetrating glance with one of regretful sympathy, and at a sign from the watchful Jessie, spoke the words that Florice would not, the words that condemned Glencora Calvert.

"What we have to tell you is about the most unexpected thing you could hear," began Harold. "Yet receive it as you may, we all have caused to be relieved from the dark phantom of dread that has haunted your hearth for nearly two months—the shadow of death. You have no longer to mourn your lost one's unknown fate; that should bring its own relief, bitter as may be the subsequent disclosures. As we watched the queen's cortege, we came upon a very strange sight—a sight of Miss Glencora Calvert herself."

"The good Lord be thanked!" broke piously from the very heart of the simple captain; his eyes beamed, he looked round at the shrinking Florice, and marveling at her tears.

"Tell me the rest, Russell, where did you see our girl?" asked the captain, wiping the gathering damp from his flushed forehead.

Harold hesitated, glancing sadly at Florice.

"It is difficult to convey the intelligence without sounding your love for the absent lady, and causing you, perhaps unjustly, to judge her extraordinary conduct. In mercy to Miss Florice, I beg you will suspend all judgment until you will hear verbal explanations from Miss Calvert's own lips, and are assured that she is uninfluenced by any power not her own. She was in the carriage with the queen's ladies; we all saw and recognized her simultaneously; beautiful as ever, healthy and happy, as if she had never lived in Lady-Bank, or disappeared from it the night before her marriage."

With blank faces, Captain Drummond and his sister stared at each other.

"Are you sure, *sure*, Florice?" cried the captain, step-



ping to her, and raising her on one strong arm, that he might read the flinching eyes that fell in perplexity before his.

"Oh, yes, indeed, guardie, I could not mistake my sister," murmured she.

"I can't believe such a miracle," said the captain, in much disquietude. "Glencora Calvert was never the woman to forsake, deliberately desert her home and honorable betrothed, distrust him as she might—and flying to England, at once install herself in such a wonderful position—she was neither an adventuress nor a hypocrite. Ah, I know this is only some curious resemblance; you have deceived yourselves, all of you."

"It was no resemblance," cried Jessie Buccleugh, sharply; "it was Glencora's self. Miracle though it be, she has proved how cruel and how false woman's heart may be!"

"Do you cast a stone?" murmured Florice, mournfully; "you who love your cousin so fondly, can you condemn his bride, the woman he gave his love to?"

Jessie started, grew pale as death, and caught at Florice's sleeve:

"I do not love Alexander in any way but as you do," faltered she—"as a sister; and only resent his betrayal by the one he trusted, as I resent your desertion by me who received your fondest devotion."

But Florice stood steadfastly before them all.

"Black as appearances may be against my absent sister, nothing but her own words will convince me that Glencora is not what I knew her to be—upright in heart, if at times hasty and haughty in deed. Oh, I pray you, don't withdraw your trust from Glencora until you have heard her story from herself. Who knows what fatal agency may be governing her actions? Anthony, you won't condemn her unheard? You will try to bring her back to me?"

Her little hand pressing his arm, her vivid eyes appealing straight through his own to his yearning soul, she bowed him to her will, he looked at the child, and he crushed the treason in his heart.

"Shall we go to Holyrood to-night, and try our best to obtain an interview?" suggested the patient captain.

Her hazel eyes shone.

"Yes—yes, guardie; let her but see her dearly loved



Captain Drummond, and Glencora would leave a kingdom, if she had it, to put herself right in his eyes. And, guardie," petitioned Florice, "take me with you; she loved me."

"Good!" exclaimed Harold Russel, struck by the proposal. "Go at once, captain; such a pleasure will not be refused. Take my carriage. I'll wait here till your return, or I'll go with you to the city if you like, and telegraph for Buccleugh, recalling him, unless Miss Jessie prefers to write to him herself?"

He regarded her keenly, and she, restraining her deepening color, calmly returned his look with a dignified shake of the head.

"You shall telegraph, if you please, Mr. Russel," said she, gently. "I shrink from dealing the blow to my cousin's peace that this knowledge will give him, unless poor Glencora can satisfy us all of her innocence in the atrocious circumstances of her disappearance. Florice, come up stairs, and let me assist you to dress."

She drew her from the room as she spoke, and Mrs. Ellathorne, with a heavy heart, followed to lay out appropriate adornments for a visit to Holyrood.

Jessie's nimble fingers performed the friendly office of tire-woman. If her warm heart revolted from the appearance of treachery in that one radiant sister, certainly it clung with tenfold affection to the other hapless little one.

When Florice hurried down to her guardian as he stood in waiting in the hall, a prettier ambassadress could scarcely be imagined than that slender fay in floating silk of pale green, white lace mantilla, and snowy crape bonnet, wreathed with ivy leaves; her pure cheek crimson with fitful excitement, her hazel eyes glimmering with anticipative triumph.

As Harold Russel handed her to the carriage he pressed her nervous fingers, and bent his earnest, dark face over her.

"Tell her that Buccleugh is losing heart, and losing his sanity," whispered he; "and his friends know it to be so. Tell her that Buccleugh never doubted her constancy for a moment."

He relinquished the little clinging fingers, the captain sprang in beside her, Russel took his place, and thus with certainty before them, and doubt and dimness left be-



hind them, once more they went forth on the track of the bride-elect.

Should they see her again, that very hour?

No wonder Florice's cheek burned with scarlet fire; no wonder Captain Drummond pulled the silky strands of his brown beard in deep abstraction, while Harold Russel anxiously watched the two. If it were to be so, what extraordinary disclosures were they about to hear?

Harold left them in the town, and they accomplished the rest of their important drive in unbroken silence.

They drew up by the royal statue in the square before Holyrood, and alighting, walked to the entrance gates, where paced the queen's guards.

And thus Captain Drummond enacted the first scene of the drama.

He requested to see the steward of the palace, and being conducted, with his lovely companion, to an empty ante-room in the modern portion of the pile, that functionary soon made his appearance. Captain Drummond asked him if the queen's attendants were then in the palace, and was informed that they were, and in waiting on her majesty.

"Tell me the ladies' names, if you please," next demanded the captain.

The old steward fumbled for his snuff-box, and considered.

"If I remember right, sir," replied he, presently, "the names of the ladies this year are Lady Leeds, the Countess Elsinger, and Lady Tresilyan."

"There were four whispered the agitated Florice.

"The other name, if you please?" inquired the captain.

"I assure you her majesty has but three of her attendants with her, and but two will accompany her to the north; the fourth lady you mention is not in her train, but is Lady Tresilyan's sister-in-law, Lady Clara Tresilyan, a favorite of her majesty, who has come up to see Edinburgh with my Lord Audley Tresilyan."

"Is Lady Clara Tresilyan in the palace now?" asked the bewildered captain.

"Oh, no; she has gone to reside with the Duchess of Airley, in Golden Crescent, Newtown."

"You may be sure, sir, that I have ample reasons for these inquiries," explained Captain Drummond, apologet-



ically. "I pray you pardon my pertinacity. Be good enough to describe the appearance of Lady Clara Tresilyan."

"Very well, sir," responded the obliging old gentleman. "As far as my memory serves me, she is a dark-faced English lady, tall, with a proud carriage, and a fine complexion, dark eyes, blue or black, don't know which, not unlike Lady Tresilyan herself, in fact, though there is not a drop of related blood between them."

The captain looked in perplexity at Florice.

"Is it not probable that one of the other three ladies might have borne the resemblance you recognized?" he asked, doubtfully, of her.

"Are the other three all English?" asked Florice, timidly.

The anxiety that spoke in her depressed tones went straight to the old man's heart; he carefully informed her on every point.

"Lady Leeds is English, and not young; the Countess Elsinger is German, and fresh from the Continent; Lady Tresilyan is Scotch, and has always lived in London, they say; she was married, nearly two months ago, to Lord Tresilyan, with the queen's august consent."

"What more do you know of Lady Tresilyan?" inquired Captain Drummond, nervously.

"Nothing, sir, of any moment, save that she is a stranger in Edinburgh, and promises herself much pleasure in visiting its sights."

Poor Captain Drummond wiped his dumfounded face with his handkerchief, sorely perplexed.

"Then the only way we can hope to identify the lady we are in search of would be to see them all, in some manner. Can you assist us to do so?"

"Not possible to-night, sir, unless your business is such that you are willing to break through all ceremony to execute it; but in the morning, as the queen goes to the station, you will see the two ladies who accompany her. If you still wish, after that, to see the other two, come to Holyrood, and you will find either themselves or some one to give you their address."

With many thanks, the guardian and ward withdrew, forced to content themselves with this scant success.

But as they rolled the dust through the pleasant streets,



once more Florice's right hand pressed the captain's arm in entreaty.

"Let us go to Golden Crescent!" pleaded she, patiently. And they went.

As a staid old groom conducted them through the long corridor to the Duchess of Airly's drawing-room, they saw a stream of gas-light, early lit in the deepening twilight, issuing from an open door, and they heard gay tones within the chamber, and as Florice, in passing, glanced in, she caught a glimpse of a stately female figure standing in the center of the elegant boudoir, its back to her, and the gay tones merrily laughed out:

"Ah, she is a spirited one! My dear creature, they will never daunt my lady into submission. She says she'll own no authority but Audley's. She vows that she means to beard the lion in his den, and recover her fortune, every guinea of it. Ha! ha! your grace should hear the bride jesting over the indignation of her relatives!"

And much more of the same import, delivered gleefully.

Captain Drummond sent his card to Lady Clara Tresilyan, desiring an interview.

Lady Clara Tresilyan sent back a polite message, that as she felt weary with her railway journey, would Captain Drummond, being a stranger to her, please excuse her until the morrow?

Then Florice, with hands that shook, penciled on the back of her own card: "*Lady Clara Tresilyan, if you have not forgotten the love of Heaven, forget not the love of your sister Florice! Grant us an interview!*" and dispatched that to the invisible Thalia.

And presently the heavy oak door was thrown wide, and a tall lady swept into the perfumed twilight of the Duchess of Airly's drawing-room—a lady with commanding figure, heavy braids of amber hair, dusky, Southern face, with vermillion cheeks, and melting, violet eyes.

She stood before them, smiling graciously, and looking down on Florice with much interest. And Lady Clara Tresilyan was *not* Glencora!

In a few words of bitter disappointment, Captain Drummond explained his motive for intruding on her at all, appealing to her evident sympathy for the unfortunate sister, Florice, to excuse their mistake. Lady Clara was vividly interested. She sat down and drew a few low-toned replies





HE WAITED FOR HIS VICTIM TO SPEAK.—(P. 64.)



from Florice's cold lips, and she proffered her assistance most sweetly.

"Most strange, indeed!" exclaimed she, thoughtfully. "And you feel assured, Miss Calvert, that you recognized the missing lady among us four, this afternoon? Ah, you must see us all in turn, then, and apprehend the Jonah! The Countess Elsinger *may* be your lost friend, sir. I am not capable of judging what are her motives for her usual taciturnity. I don't like her, therefore I am doing her injustice in mentioning her name at all, only that she is the one stranger among the quartette. Look well at my Lady Leeds and Countess Elsinger to-morrow. As for my sister-in-law, Lady Tresilyan, she is no more likely to be your unfortunate Miss Calvert than Queen Pomare is."

With a few expressions of polite regret on her side, and civility on the captain's, they retired, baffled.

"We can do nothing more to-night, my darling girlie!" said the captain, tenderly, as they once more sat in the carriage. "This curious affair eludes all attempts to unravel it. We must do as the palace steward advised, I suppose—obtain a good view of the two ladies in the queen's train to-morrow. Fortunately, we have it in our power to trace each one of these four suspected persons, and, sooner or later, we shall meet, face to face, with that lady whom you believe to be your sister. Till then, sweetheart, commit your anxiety to a higher power than the puny power of man; for see, my love, how ill-advised the best of us are—how easily our wisdom is overthrown!"

When Florice spoke, at last, her words were few and cold.

"Anthony," said she, looking him full in the face, "are we sure that Lady Clara Tresilyan knew nothing of what once was Glencora Calvert? Why should her unnamed friend jest at her relative's indignation?"

A somber frown descended on his frank brow. He tried to escape the drift of her meaning, but it found him out, and tortured him.

"If that was so, Florice, would Glencora be worth the seeking?" said he, between his teeth.

And Florice said nothing.

Ah, well-a-day! It was a bitter home-coming, after all.

And what said the friends at home? Little enough. But if their words were scant, their thoughts were deep. The Glencora they had loved seemed drifting away, not only



from their ken, but from her sacred throne in their trust. Whither should their suppositions wander, that they were not met by evil-eyed suspicion? In gloom, another night of waiting passed.

The morning that was to behold the queen *en route* for Balmoral, dawned through chilling showers, which swept from horizon to horizon in sudden sheets of blinding drops, washing the foliage into brighter emerald, the grain fields into richer gold.

Yet Florice bravely adhered to the arrangement they had thought it prudent to adopt, that of riding on horseback to Holyrood Palace, the more easily to make quick progress through the anticipated throng, in their resolve to observe the Countess Elsinger and Lady Leeds.

As the captain lifted her to the saddle, in a windy break between the showers, he sighed to see the rude gusts sweeping over the bending figure, and dashing the chestnut ringlets across her colorless cheek.

His sweet ward—his tender girlie, whom he had loved with such sacred passion, and cherished from every shadowy care—his *Florice*, to battle thus with wrong and heartless treachery!

As the guardian and ward ambled down the arcaded avenue, we so often have traversed in mental presence, each cast a backward glance, through the long vista, at the majestic mansion of misery and doubt, and a swift cry burst, mentally, from heart to Heaven:

“Oh, Heaven—oh, pitiful Father, send us home in peace at last!”

And then the heavy gates, opened for them by the gardener's boy, clanged behind them, and they cantered down the plashing lane, and the streaming clouds met them on the way, and coldly swathed the little sister in clinging folds of wet.

And her spirit rose in the storm, and her timid eyes gathered light from the frowning day.

“Come, Anthony; come quickly!” cried she, with silver voice in the rain. “To-day we shall win the victory. 'Tis ever darkest before dawn.”

On they dashed through the crowded streets, and nearing Holyrood there surged the throng, anxious for a glimpse at the queen, and the guards, lords, and attendants clus-



tered around the royal carriage—a close one, because of the unwelcome weather.

And as Anthony and Florice threaded their way through the backing people, who willingly crushed each other to let pass such a quiet pair, and paused by the queen's statue, a cheer burst from a thousand throats, and the queen, leaning on the arm of her royal spouse, passed slowly down from the palace portal to her carriage, entered, and the door was shut.

Then the white steeds, with stately steps, moved down the glistening causeway and entered the park.

The prince and princess entered their chariot in like manner, and followed in their train, and at last—at last emerged the ladies of honor.

But alas! not being royal personages, and, therefore, not holding themselves obliged to shed the effulgence of their sacred countenances upon that portion of the Scottish nation that stood soaking there in the September floods for their sakes, these ladies tripped hastily from the friendly shelter of the palace to the carriage door, and gaining their seats without raising their faces, were driven away too.

So the foiled equestrians had nothing for it but to canter in a wide circle outside the lingerers along the royal route, and crossing the park amid a deluge of annoying rain, reached St. Margaret's Station first, where the royal railway car, glittering in snowy freshness and gilded blazonings, and attached to a flowery-crown-capped engine, unsnortingly awaited the arrival of its august freight. Thus, with the field nearly to themselves, the guardian and ward sat on their steaming and restive horses till the queen arrived, alighted, bowing graciously to each, and glancing with a smile, perhaps of pity, at the wan face of this little Scotch subject.

Then the royal children, laughing in childish good humor at the untoward rain, and running under the flower-arched gateway to the shelter of the platform.

And then the eagerly eyed court ladies.

And as they tripped by, each with anxious upward glance at the sullen sky, Captain Drummond murmured to Florice:

“No, Florrie; oh, no, these are strangers.”

A haughty, middle-aged dame was the Lady Leeds; a



blonde, a *belle-esprit*, and obese was the German Elsinger, and neither was a whit like Glencora.

“Lady Tresilyan is the one,” said Florice, in a calm voice.

So they rode back on their traces.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### THE FALSE HEART AND THE TRUE.

Slower poured the rain in sullen perseverance, empty and desolate-looking was the rolling expanse of the Queen's Park, but yesterday glittering with life and beauty. The lonely riders had their road all to themselves, and the sweeping sheets of mist almost hid them from each other.

If little Florice's face was pale and cold, and her heart numbed into icy endurance, the captain's was not so.

Every glance he directed toward that slender little rider at his side—breasting the wild tornado sweeping up sheer from Portabello shores—every gleam of her white, set face through the hurrying scud scorched his heart into deeper fire, and kindled his face into hotter excitement. It hurt his great heart to see his delicate flower out in the storm of life—committed ruthlessly to its bitterest roughnesses.

He would joyfully have borne triple the load of her grief to save her tender heart, and proudly would he have courted the buffeting and the scorning which seemed to be ordained for her, as the reward of her sweet constancy to her sister.

“Heavens!” he cried, at last, “I can't stand it!”

“What, guardie?” murmured the sweet, plaintive voice of Florice, as if loaded with tears—and, indeed, from a well of tearful agony came that childish tone.

“This rain, and you under it! Girlie, come straight home. You're not to stand such exposure. I won't have it.”

“Rain! What care I for the storm, Anthony? I'm not thinking much of that; I don't feel it.”

“But I do. Florice, it's like to kill me, seeing you by my side to-day. Oh, my dove! my wee nestler! the sorrow and the storm are beating on you too hard this day. Let me take you home, dear, and I'll work like a giant by myself.”



He stopped short in his fiery, broken-voiced earnestness, and took her hands in his, for his eyes were so dim, and the storm was so fierce, that he must needs hold his little Florice to assure himself that she was not whirled away.

"We'll go one place first, Anthony," said Florice, with her hazel eyes streaming tender gratitude upon him; "we'll go back to Holyrood, and ask for Lady Tresilyan."

"To Holyrood? Well, my girl, we'll go again—and be balked again," he muttered to himself.

They urged their shrinking horses, and soon cantered into the city again, up the short street, and before Victoria's dripping statue.

"Need you dismount?" asked the captain, doubtfully, holding Florice's horse, and looking up at the somber front of the palace.

"I will wait first and see," she answered, with her eager eyes also scanning each window in turn.

He led her horse into a sheltered side of the court, and applied for admittance. A groom in livery appeared.

The hall, as disclosed by the opening of the door, appeared in some disorder; huge packing-cases were standing side by side, drapings were hiding stairway and gilding, velvet carpets were being rolled up; evidently the pageant was over when the queen had gone.

"Has Lady Tresilyan yet left the palace?" demanded the captain.

"Her ladyship has not yet started," answered the man, with a bow.

"Will you carry up Captain Drummond's compliments, and entreat an interview?"

"Unfortunately, Lady Tresilyan has gone out with my lord just twenty minutes ago, sir."

"A-h, gone out! how unfortunate! I suppose *you* cannot tell me where?"

"Sir, I have the honor to be his lordship's valet, and I *can* tell you where. My lord and lady drove in a close carriage to see her sister."

Captain Drummond's brow quivered; was it over at last? But he must make sure, though, of my lady.

"My good man, I would like very much to meet Lady Tresilyan this morning, for my business is very urgent. Will you be so kind as to describe her ladyship's appearance, that I may recognize her?"



“My lady is tall, finely formed, majestic, and sprightly. That’s her port. Her face is handsome, complexion blooming, teeth perfect, eyes laughing and black—yes, my lady’s eyes are miracles—hair abundant, raven black and curling; and I think I’ve presumed as far as is necessary. We are all very proud of my lady, sir; seeing she’s so new a bride, she carries great admiration. Sir, she was called the Beauty of the Court and ‘Midsummer Rose’ when she married my lord, in July. Her majesty was charmed with her.”

“Anthony, Anthony,” breathed the little Florice, “come home—it is she. Glencora has gone to see her sister; come home!”

Who would think to hear those startling words spoken in so calm, so mournful a tone? The lips that uttered them were cold and stern, the heart of Florice was heavy as lead.

“*Married in July.*” To a lord—yes, that it was; eloped with a lord clandestinely for the sake of ambition.

If this was Glencora, she was no longer Glencora to Florice. Glencora was good and noble—this Glencora was not.

Side by side they cantered through the streets. No word was spoken, no slacking of their headlong pace. In half an hour they had traversed Gower lane; in half a minute the iron gate was spinning open, and ere it clanged back to its place, the door of Lady-Bank was reached.

There was no close carriage at the door; there were only conscious faces seen for a fleeting moment at the windows, then reappearing at the open door.

“She’s not—she’s not *gone*?” gasped Florice.

“Have they been here?” also questioned Anthony, boldly and excitedly.

Jessie Buccleugh burst into a torrent of inquiries.

Mrs. Ellathorne kept forcible possession of her senses, to be of use.

“No one has been at this house since you left it,” she said, gravely.

Captain Drummond turned like lightning at that, and caught Florice in his arms. He was not a moment too soon. Suspense, fatigue, and disappointment had had their due effect, and the girl, swaying dizzily in her seat, fell forward into the faithful arms stretched to receive her.

She did not faint, however; grief and misery were gripping her tender heart too fiercely for that. She lay on the



sofa in the parlor where her lover had carried her, and her whole form quivered with the inward violence she was suffering.

"Girlie, girlie!" murmured Anthony, trembling for her.

He bent over her and covered her little shoulder with one broad, irresolute hand, but her hands were on her face, and her brown hair rippled down in kind luxuriance over her.

"Hester," entreated the captain, with his bronzed face all appealing, "come to Florice—she'll die!"

Mrs. Ellathorne was rapidly preparing some restorative with careful, unfaltering hands. Jessie Buccleugh was on her knees beside the couch, quite still with alarm.

"Go away, Anthony," said Mrs. Ellathorne. "Go, Jessie, dear lassie. I'll tend my poor bairn myself."

Reluctantly the good captain obeyed, although he thought he had the best right to be there, and Jessie Buccleugh, anxious and sober-faced, followed him.

"Bairnie, is this *you* succumbing to ill success so soon?" And Mrs. Ellathorne lifted the lax form of the exhausted girl in her arms, and began gently to untie her little dripping hat. "My sweet bairnie, what's given your heart this blow? Who should have been here to meet you and Anthony?"

Poor little Florice stood up with her habit trailing around her in funereal folds, and her nervous hand fluttered at her throat as the hysteria rose high.

"Glencora!" she cried, in a spasmodic way; "she has deserted Alexander for an English lord, and she's Lady Tresilian now, and no longer Glencora. She's no more my sister whom I loved. Oh, she has fallen—*fallen!*"

She shrieked in her maddening excitement and wrung her frantic hands; it was tearing her heart asunder thus to tear her trust from Glencora; it was worse than death to the lost one thus to lose her.

Mrs. Ellathorne asked no more questions. She quietly and firmly insisted on her retiring to her own room for an hour or two.

"Anthony will not be idle, I assure you," she urged. "Leave it in his hands, I implore you, Florice, and don't endanger your own life."

The captain was pacing up and down the long drawing-room, to which he and Jessie had retreated, and, with be-



wildered heart, he was trying to satisfy her anxious questions, when his sister entered.

"She'll do better after a quiet rest," said Mrs. Ellathorne, answering his eager look; "and now explain this extraordinary business. The poor child declares her sister to be married to an English lord."

"The case stands thus," cried Captain Drummond. "Jessie vouches for the identity of the lady in the queen's suite; Florice swears she was her sister. Well, we have seen three of these four ladies who were in her majesty's train, and none of them is Glencora. There remains but one of the four—Lady Tresilyan—married in July, a Scotch lady, and answering in description exactly to Glencora; her we neither have seen, nor can we contrive to see her, whether by accident of circumstance or otherwise, I do not mean to judge. Now, if Jessie, Florice, and Harold Russel have not strangely mistaken a resemblance for the reality of our lost girl, Lady Tresilyan is certainly that girl, and I mean to confront her this very day, cost what it may. Thank Heaven, she is still at Holyrood Palace!"

"Mr. Russel telegraphed last night for Alexander," said Mrs. Ellathorne, as calmly as if she had been listening to a common detail of business; in point of fact, her whole heart revolted against the probability of this story with utter disbelief; with her previous knowledge of Glencora's character, she would not understand such duplicity as this revelation involved.

"Then he should have been here this morning," said the captain, fidgeting about, and looking down the avenue, as if he expected him to appear in sight that minute; "but he can't have come, for the Aberdeen train is in before this time."

"Why, Anthony, he may be far enough away from Aberdeen," said his sister. "When he wrote to you last he was at Alvic, in Inverness."

"Yes," aspirated the captain, "wearing his heart out in false hopes. He thought a Glencora Allison living there as a music teacher might be our girl. Poor fellow! he said if he failed he'd be back to Aberdeen in two days. Sure enough he's failed, if she's in this town to-day living in palace halls. Poor Alexander! poor good-hearted fellow!" breathed Anthony, with his face averted to the window; "if this is true, he's been doubly wronged."



Jessie Buccleugh's fair face flushed a deep carmine; her soft blue eyes sparked indignantly; she turned hastily away and trifled with the callas in a porphyry statuette vase.

"She may be a grand lady with a title," thought Jessie; "but she's too mean a worm for Alexander."

The day was wearing on apace, and the sea hurricane had drifted across the city to some other shore, and Edinburgh town smiled fairer than ever with snowy spires and glittering windows in the afternoon sun.

And heavy-hearted Captain Drummond drove with an anxious foreboding, in his spruce little cab and his best dress suit, down the flowery Gower lane to call at the palace.

His hopes were sinking fast, and his soul turned reluctantly from the ordeal through which he was forcing himself to pass.

He did not wish to unmask the treachery which had been wrought upon them—better she were lost forever than thus found. But the task must be accomplished, for the sake of wronged Florice Calvert grieving into insanity—for the sake of doubly wronged Alexander, left to bear the shadow of many a cruel injustice, for her sake who had basely deserted him.

He drew the check-string and alighted at Holyrood, knocked the ponderous knocker of one of the side doors, was admitted into an anteroom and to the presence of the house steward.

"Yes, Lady Tresilyan was in the palace."

"Be so kind, sir, as to send up this card for me," said the captain, with rather a dubious look.

The steward summoned a servant and dispatched the card.

"Her ladyship is just preparing for her departure at six o'clock," said the old man, as if in excuse for his hesitation.

"Her departure?" ejaculated Anthony; "she's going to leave Edinburgh so soon?"

"That is her ladyship's intention," replied the steward.

Then there was dead silence, the old man looking up at the royal arms over the mantel-piece, and courteously waiting for further questions—the young man, with a set face, savagely biting his nails, while his heart beat like a funeral drum.

In ten minutes the door opened, and my lord's valet stood bowing and apologizing there.



“Her ladyship regrets, sir, but her fright in the morning has rather unsettled her, and she would rather not see strangers.”

“Go to Lady Tresilyan, and tell her I cannot go without an interview!”

Captain Drummond would have lengthened his message, but some hot blood mounting to his brow, his voice became thick, and he wrenched the words off into silence.

My lord’s valet bowed lower than before.

“Nothing would give her ladyship greater pleasure than to accommodate the gentleman, but if the gentleman would be so kind as to leave his message, her ladyship would prefer it.

“Go!” cried Anthony, with ungovernable fire. “Don’t dare to give messages of your own to me, fellow! Go!”

He stood erect, with blue lightning in his eye, with haughty command expressed in his outstretched arm.

Captain Drummond had quelled a mutiny on board ship off the Carrabas, with that stern eye; Captain Drummond had laid a traitor low, on his own quarter-deck, with that pointing hand. A mild man, when roused, is terrible as a whirlwind.

Perhaps my lord’s valet had a prescience of a moral giant standing before him; perhaps the scent of danger was not acceptable to his dainty olfactories; for, with a few murmured words of deprecation, his padded legs fleetly ascended the grand staircase, and were incontinently lost to view.

The steward prudently withdrew, to attend some less puzzling summons, and when the captain next turned round fiercely at the opening of the door, prepared to war with Apollyon himself, his eyes encountered a stylish lady’s maid, airy, piquant, and knowing.

“Sir,” said mademoiselle, in lisping English, “my lady would the much rather that you would leave her in solitude, undisturbed. She has sustained much peril this morning; she has been dashed against the Duke of Wellington’s monument, monsieur, by her wicked horses. My lord rescues her from her peril, takes her back to this palace in a common cab of the street. My lady is so fatigued and exhausted that she cannot see you—that she sees no one—that she has been wrecked on her way to his lordship’s sister. They leave this city at the hour of six; the strength must be treasured for the journey. Will the gentleman excuse?”



And my lady's *femme de chambre* swept a courtesy of latest Parisian grace.

Under this deluge of politeness, poor Anthony Drummond was swept helplessly into a whirlpool of confusion.

Three facts combined at once to stun him. It was not Florice she had set out to seek in the morning; it was Lady Clara Tresilyan.

She was going to leave Edinburgh immediately. She was slipping through his fingers.

"Is Lord Tresilyan in the palace at present?" queried he, after a pause.

Scarcely disappointed, he heard that—

"His lordship went to see Lady Clara, and inform her of my lady's accident. She returns with his lordship to the palace, that they may travel together."

"Where are they going?"

This is the captain's last shot; the locker is empty.

"Where?" echoed the Frenchwoman, with penciled eyebrows raised to ebony hair. "Monsieur, I could not begin to attempt to instruct you—my lady is so volatile. At two o'clock my lady has returned from her drive of terror, of tragedy, and she is in very fiery temper. My lord laughs, and soothes her; but my lady won't be soothed. 'I sha'n't stay in wretched Edinburgh!' she cries. 'I sha'n't stay in miserable Scotland! I hate Scotland! Take me back to London!'"

"She said that?" breathed Anthony Drummond.

"Ah, but my lady is so changeable! At three of the day she is all smiles, and cries, 'We'll have you up to the Highlands, Celeste, to learn Gaelic, and you shall marry a man with a philabeg!' Now, my lady is in a terrible state, and will see no one. Cannot monsieur leave a message?"

And the lady's maid wheeled an *escritoire* before the captain, spread dainty gilt paper, gold pen, and crystal inkstand, and then awaited the expected message.

Poor Captain Drummond leaned his elbows on the desk, and buried his face in his hands, for his head was whirling round and round with Celeste's rapid succession of words; and somehow he could not get rid of the idea that she was outwitting him.

With a helpless groan, he dipped the golden pen in the inky well, and as he felt the last cord slipping through his



hands, and the sails flapping of the foundering ship, he determined to give one sting to faithless Glencora Calvert.

“Glencora,” he wrote, “you have gained a title, trapped a lord, secured fortune, advancement, and distinction. For these you have sacrificed honor, betrayed a true man, deserted a virtuous family, and broken the heart of a sister, pure as Heaven. Anthony, who once loved you, makes but one request: For the sake of honor, love, and Heaven—see your sister before you leave Edinburgh, and satisfy her that you have not basely flung off all natural ties; then, if you will, let the breach, which you have cast between us, remain forever unspanned. Glencora, in your happiness and pride do you never remember that Alexander Buccleugh has been wrecked on the quicksands, because he put faith in a false woman? Let that remembrance be the brightest jewel in your coronet.”

Captain Drummond dashed these words down, scarcely conscious of their wild incoherence; then he folded over the sheet, enveloped it, and picked up a seal, but glancing upon the turquoise crest, and seeing the initials “A. T.” he flung it angrily down, and wafering it, he handed it to the smiling lady’s maid.

“Deliver this note to your mistress, and take that to buy a token for your sweetheart.”

He thrust a five-pound note in her hand, crammed his hat on his head, and hurried from the palace.

Had the captain been possessed of the writer’s power of invisibility, and entered the room where Celeste stood, he would have beheld her open the letter to Glencora, read it, and exclaiming “Monsieur is insane!” throw it into the fire.

Captain Drummond walked along the Edinburgh streets, perhaps as miserable a man as any in Midlothian; his face was actually haggard, and set into stern lines, with the hard, unaccustomed thoughts which were filling his heart.

His eyes burned and moistened as he reached the railway station, and stood on the platform, waiting for the Aberdeen train to come in. He leaned up against the stone railings, with his eyes fixed on the passing stream of people, and his thoughts were so engrossing that half an hour elapsed before he changed his position.

The shrill, prolonged whistle of the coming train he was waiting for, roused him from his reverie, with a start, and eagerly he looked into each car as it passed him.



Then, with a suddenly purpled face, he was springing forward and grasping the hand of a pale, worn-looking gentleman, who was picking his way, with drooping head, among the crowd.

"Welcome home, Buccleugh. Here's one that's glad to see you, old fellow. God bless you, Alexander, you've suffered grief enough to reduce you this way."

Tears were in the honest captain's eyes now, his voice was husky, and he linked his silent comrade's arm within his own to draw him away, with a convulsive gesture of friendship.

"Where—where is she?" he gasped at last, and Anthony now saw that intense excitement had stricken his friend almost dumb.

"Never mind now, old fellow," he said, soothingly, "you'll hear all about it when you've had a rest. Come home now, and be coddled up by little Florice; you'll rouse her if nothing else will."

"Go home? Go home when my lost girl is in this city, Anthony? Can *you* ask me to be calm? Where is she that I may fly to her side? Why are you not taking me instantly to Glencora? What has happened to her, Anthony? I implore you tell me in one word!"

Alexander stopped short in his excitement, drew his hand from his friend's arm, and confronted him with wild desperation in his eyes. It was hard to see the change which bitter sorrow had made in his countenance. Lines of pain were drawn upon a brow once smooth and serene as marble—a deadly pallor spread its pale ensign over every feature, and the once brave, ardent blue eyes were sunken and melancholy.

"Hush, Buccleugh! This excitement is needless," said Anthony, with a sinking heart. "I'll tell you all about it in private. Come, we'll hail a cab, and on the way to Lady-Bank we'll have a talk."

Thus speaking, Captain Drummond forced him gently into a cab, told the cabman to drive slowly to Lady-Bank, got in, and shut the door.

"Where did you get the telegram which Russel sent you?"

"I was at Skene, seven miles from Aberdeen, following up a party of travelers, which interested me, when the telegram reached my hotel last night. They only sent it



by the stage to me this morning. I got it at ten o'clock ; there was no conveyance to be had at Skene, so I walked down to Aberdeen, and was barely in time to catch the midday train. Thank Heaven, however, no time was lost."

"And you have been fasting since early this morning? Poor old friend!"

Alexander looked at him with a kind of patient anguish, and put the bulletin in his hand.

"There it is," he said. "Read it and see all I have had to feed on to-day and then tell me something more. In Heaven's name, Anthony, cut short this suspense. I—I'm not as strong as I have been, and this upsets me terribly!"

The captain was fain to turn from the shaking hand on his arm to the telegram in his fingers, for his own lips were quivering with deep and heartfelt sympathy. Truly the contents were but few. They ran thus:

"Come down to Edinburgh with all dispatch. The missing one has been seen in this city. H. Russel to A. Buccleugh, Royal Hotel, Union street."

"Now, Anthony!" pleaded poor Alexander, patiently.

Thus adjured, the heart-wrung man griped hard his friend's hand and applied the scalpel.

"Well, Alexander, in the first place I'm going to tell you that she's safe and well, so you need not be alarmed any more on that score."

"Thank Heaven!" ejaculated the listener, leaning back in his seat with a tear in his eye.

"But from appearances and actions we fear—we fear——"

"What, Anthony?"

"That Glencora has betrayed our trust by willfully deserting us."

"Explain ; I cannot understand you!"

There was nothing in Alexander's face now but blank wonder, and perhaps a suspicion of resentment.

"Buccleugh, my friend, how shall I convey my meaning to you without wounding your feelings? It's a hard task for me, but you must bear it like a man. You know her Majesty the Queen passed through the town yesterday on her way to Balmoral, and the girls Jessie and Florice, with young Russel to escort them, were in Arthur's seat to see them pass. Well, in her suite they discovered——Alex-



ander, you know. She was among the court ladies, magnificently dressed, gay, blooming, and seemingly happy. My friend, it's a queer story from first to last, but bear it bravely. We've made inquiries, followed about the ladies in attendance like their shadows, seen them all face to face freely enough, except *Lady Tresilyan*, married this last July to Lord Audley Tresilyan, a nobleman from London, and apparently she carefully shuns all chance of being confronted by us. I have just come away from the palace, where they told me she would leave Edinburgh at six o'clock. I implored an interview, *and was denied it*. Alexander, think over this, and make your own conclusions."

Long the devoted young man sat, looking with a stony, unseeing stare from the carriage window; then he turned round, and his white face flushed a sudden red.

"I hear your story, and I believe it; but I don't understand you when you say I must make my own conclusions. What conclusion does this story cause you to make?"

"What!" cried the captain, in unguarded surprise, "Is there a doubt as to the color this revelation put upon her character? Can't you see that she has forsaken us all, and basely betrayed you for some scape-grace lord, with whom she clandestinely eloped the night before she should have fulfilled her vows to you? Don't you understand that Glencora Calvert lives no more as our lost girl, but a vile adventuress, who made true hearts her stepping-stones to sordid ambition? Cast her from you, man—she's not worthy your smallest thought. Forget her, as I must forget the girl I loved and cherished for twelve years—as Florice must forget her only sister."

In his heat and excitement, Captain Drummond poured out his long burning wrath, and forgot the shrinking heart beneath his scalpel.

Alexander rose to his feet in the rattling cab and lifted his arm as if to strike down his bride's accuser.

"She may have been stolen from me," he gasped; "they may be forcing her to act a part, but dare not, Anthony Drummond, to say that Glencora, my lost love, was false! Before God—before highest Heaven I swear it—she is pure!"

Then the straining cord snapped, and Alexander Buccleugh fell down white and inert, the blood streaming from



his mouth. and the cab drew up at the gates of Lady-Bank.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### CONQUERED AT LAST.

Lady Kilmeny Strathmore looked down from the grim casement of her rosy "lady's bower" over the wide waste of the Dornock waters, frothing up to the feet of rude crag and rugged undulation, far down to the dim haze which indicated the spot where the little town of Golspie nestled among hills, and scurrying sea blasts keen from the angry bosom of the North Sea, and as the lonely Lady of Strathmore scanned the wide horizon, she thought she saw a thick black column stand up like a pillar upon the confines of the heaving desert, far to the southward, and her heart gave a great leap, for she knew it was neither a screaming sea-bird, nor the black sail of a fisherman's smack, such as had rewarded many such scrutinies of those black, anxious eyes, that long September day.

"Mysie," cried my lady's quick tones—"Mysie, find a telescope speedily and bring it to me."

Mysie precipitantly fled from the room, with dismay written on her features, and ran straight to the steward's room.

"Woe betide us; my lady wants a telescope."

"A what, lass?" asked the old man, looking up, testily, from some complicated-looking account books. "A what?"

"A telescope, man; and I ken well enough there's nae sic thing in a Strathmore castle, and she'll fume her poor heartie in twa to be refused it."

"A telescope, lass, is it? And, for guid sake, what for?"

"Oh, what ken I? She glowers oot ow're the dismal rocks upon the sea till her bonnie een are glazed and dry and burning like a peat coal, and if I look but lang at her she flares oot and makes me tak' my work to anither room, and when I creep back hours after, my bonnie has cried till she's white as the wan-water. And a' this lang day she's sittin' at her grim tower window, whae ne'er a glint o' sun-



shine ever comes, and she's made me gie her the morsels o' weals in her hands, which she wi' nae taste for looking owre the weary sea. Oh, my sweet mistress! my heart is sore for her. What wraith is she looking for to come walking owre the sea?"

And at this point Mysie covered her face with her white muslin apron, and cried heartily.

Down-trodden, repulsed, and domineered over as the lady's-maid certainly was by her cold, haughty mistress, she nevertheless clung with extravagant fidelity to the sorrowful Lady of Strathmore. Surely there was some secret charm in this proud girl, that all who had yet met her in her new possessions felt the influence of her strange will, far stronger than their own.

"An' canna ye *mak* a telescope, then, if there's nane here?" implored the simple Mysie, who had a very imperfect idea of the article in question.

"Tut, tut, lassie! *My* makin' wadna do. Guid preserve us—What's that?"

"Oh, it's the Lady Kilmeny's bell!" cried Mysie, turning blue with terror, "and I danna gang up to say her nay. You maun gang, Andrew Thompson, and if ye mak my lady gloom at ye wi' your dour ways, she'll greef a' the night. Sae mind your tongue, man."

Andrew shuffled up the stairs, and presented himself within the door of my lady's chamber.

"Well, the telescope, quick!" quoth the lady, holding out an imperative hand, but never turning her head from the window.

"My lady," answered the steward, with sober and subdued voice, "there's na sic thing as a telescope in Strathmore Tower."

Lady Kilmeny turned her face at that with a quick, taunting laugh, and her eyes, almost terrible in their strange brilliance, flashed up to the old man's troubled countenance.

"Ha, ha! I might have known that my good kinsman, the laird, would be a mortal foe to such conveniences for the Lady of Strathmore. My own keys, my own steeds, my own yacht moored in yonder creek, the very rooms of my own castle are under *his* command, and used or let alone at his pleasure. Let him come and dictate to me what dresses I must wear, what I must eat, what I must touch, what I must pray Heaven for. Now, Andrew, I protest



that my eyes looked upon a telescope down in the banquet-room across the antlers of a mastodon, for aught I know or care, on that happy day when I first set foot in Strathmore as its nominal mistress. Carry your eyes down there now, and perhaps they may encounter the same object to-day."

"My lady," said the old servitor, greatly moved by the sad spectacle of his lady's glancing eyes, and thin, white face; "my dear, sweet lady, I'd walk on my old knees to Morven Peak to serve you, but I canna serve you here. Laird Tyndale has the telescope. He said it was old and worn, and he's taken it."

"Many thanks, my obliging old friend—don't accomplish that acrobatic feat to Morven for me; instead, take one of my most comfortable horses, and ride over to Strathmore Hall, and tell my cousin Robin I want to see him."

"The young Maister Robin, my lady?"

"Yes—no other. I don't want Gavin, and I don't want Kenneth. If Robin is not there, come back alone."

With alacrity, the old steward departed on his mission.

Bracken Hough was three miles off, but the devoted Andrew performed the distance with remarkable celerity, and acquitted himself of his mission with a diplomatic tact which did him credit. While Gavin and Kenneth were besieging him with questions, yellow-haired Robin, the happy favorite, obedient to a turn of the wily old visitor's eye, was trotting briskly down the heather-fringed road to Strathmore Tower, his warm blood dancing in his lusty veins, and his warm heart bounding lightly to his gay whistling, as pleasantly he thought of his lovely cousin Kilmeny, and flew to do her bidding.

My lady met him at the entrance of the court, habited for riding, with whip in hand—dainty scarlet boots tapping the flagstones.

"Good Robin," she said, with her little hand outstretched, "you have not been long. Come, I am ready."

"Going a riding, sweet cousin?" cried Robin, with his merry eyes traveling well pleased over her dainty equipments. "And am I to be my lady's esquire? Bravo then! We'll stretch it over twenty miles, if you like."

And Robin, with a secret thrill at his heart, felt his cousin's light weight, as he lifted her up in his arms, and placed her on the snorting palfrey in waiting, with its gay,



white bridle studded with tiny silver bells, its scarlet saddle cloth, and its long, sweeping tail.

My lady sat bolt upright on her pawing steed, quite unconscious of all the loveliness and grace which enveloped her—quite unconscious of the gay young eyes looking up to her, and gradually deepening and darkening for love of her.

And her cold, immovable face was set toward the sea, with straight lance-like gazes from dusky eyes, searching the long column of gray mists trailing across the Firth, after a gradually nearing object.

When handsome Robin pirouetted to her side on his chestnut hunter and gayly cried:

“Which way, cousin mine?”

My lady answered briefly,

“To Golspie.”

So they swept from under the shadows of Strathmore, and into the wild, free expanse of the sheep-downs, and broom-covered wastes, but the young cavalier's brow was clouded, despite the sunshine.

“My lady, why must it be to Golspie?” demanded he, after a neck to neck gallop down the valley, with his impatient companion.

Lady Kilmeny turned toward him suddenly.

“I'll tell you why!” she answered, with a daring recklessness in her tones, curiously at variance with her thin, shadowy face; “the mail steamer has been in the offing for an hour and more, and as she enters Golspie dock, the Lady of Strathmore, and her very good cousin must be there in right hospitable style to welcome my friend from the Lowlands, who comes so far to see Lady Kilmeny's grand fortune.”

“A friend?” cried Robin with a start. “Cousin Kilmeny, does my father know that you have a friend coming here to-day?”

“Not that I am aware of,” replied my lady, coolly, “unless he has taken the trouble to intercept my correspondence at the post-office.”

The young man flushed a fiery red—his brow darkened, and he looked at my lady's mocking face, with all the stern Strathmore blood, in full play, in his heart.

“Lady Kilmeny,” he said, slowly, “when you left your family and your country to take the honors of your falling house, did you intend to let it sink before your eyes; while



you but acted the spy upon its weakness, and clung to friends who should be friends no more to you, were you loyal and true to that name which you uphold? Are you so little a lass of spirit that you seek to patch up the broken web of the past, and to go back upon the bravery you showed, when first you left those obscure friends, and came to Strathmore? Shame upon your courage then! Out upon your weak heart! I'd rather have had honest Lady Rosecleer, who flouts and flurs at her father's people, and forsakes them for seven years, than Kilmeny Strathmore, who wears the honors, and betrays the givers in her heart!"

She looked at his angry face—she met his indignant blue eyes, and a weary shadow crept over her countenance—sudden weakness seemed to quiver in the proud, curling lips, and she snatched her eyes from his, brimming with passionate tears, to send them in a wild appeal over the frothing waves.

"Oh, Robin, Robin, Robin!" whispered my lady, low, "I would they had left *one* heart in cold Strathmore, for poor Kilmeny, and that heart should be thine!"

"How often has my lady written clandestinely to her Lowland friends?" demanded Robin Strathmore, hearing nothing but the wrathful throbbing of his own angry heart, and beginning to glower from side to side with glancing eyes, while his fierce heel fretted with sharp spurs the silky side of his starting steed.

And then the white reins were dropped on the palfrey's arching neck, and my lady's little hands were clasped together on her knees in meek entreaty, while the fire in her unearthly eyes was quenched in slowly rolling tears.

"Robin, you do me wrong," she said. "Do you remember the letter you sent for me with your own hand?"

He bowed a grave acquiescence, and an uneasy cloud troubled his brow.

"That was my first letter, and my last," she said. "Kilmeny, of Strathmore, warped and strange as her path is spread before her by the stony-hearted arbiter of her life, is incapable of deceiving one soul who ever trusted her. *You* trusted to my honor, Cousin Robin, and I kept your trust. Your father, the laird, trusts nothing to me but the inside of my prison walls, and the jailer who would lead me in custody to view my possessions, and I care little how I



conquer his plans. Robin, I have not deceived you. I took you with me to-day to meet this coming friend."

The young man heaved a long sigh. His brown hand went over his brow once or twice, as if to smooth out the lines of care and trouble. He looked at his cousin's white face and heavy, tearful eyes, with a long, remorseful look.

"Lady Kilmeny," he began to say, "if this friend *should* come, the arrival would not make you happier. The question now is, which life are you going to cling to—the past or the present? Those friends——"

"Robin," cried my lady, "the past is nothing to me. Have I not said so? But this friend—you know I left some with no farewell!" she said, in a sinking voice, with wistful glance fixed on space.

"I can't say yes or nay about a thing which I don't understand," said Robin, bluntly. "But this I know, that if I had been given up willingly by my kith and kin for the sake of a grand house claiming me, I'd have little enough to say to the family who let me go, preferring news of my distant greatness to my presence. Then, how came you, Cousin Kilmeny, with that haughty face, speaking in every line of Strathmore's noblest blood—how came you by such a failing heart?"

She drew back, with her eyes flashing angrily.

"What right has your father to speak of my friends to you, or Gavin, or Kenneth? How dare he discuss my affairs, when I have forbidden him to mention them even to me? Even now I think more of those friends than of any one in the length and breadth of Sutherland."

"My father said that you would be pining after a poor printer's lad, in your bonnie Aberdeen," cried Robin, stung into cruelty, with lips that matched my lady's own in their scornful cast, and eyes which, blue and sunny as they were, could equal the stormy wave which foams over the sunken rock; and in his present fiery expression and my lady's darkening face, it was strange how these two resembled each other, despite the utter contrast in their type of beauty.

My lady gazed at him with eyes once more the blazing lights of that too fragile face, now rosed and hectic with indignation, and her hands went up in a wild clap to her brow.

"Heaven guard my reason!" she cried. "Does your



father, the laird, want a madwoman for the Lady of Strathmore? Away! Get you gone, and leave me to my misery alone! My own heart is better company than you!"

Towering and spirited, with the haughty blood in full play, my Lady Kilmeny drew off her horse to one side, and warded him from her with angry hands.

"I'll fling away that weapon if you'll keep up that spirit," answered Robin, eying her admiringly. "I'll ne'er breathe reproach again to you. Still keep brave heart within your bonnie breast, and wrestle with the regrets which wean your loyalty from Strathmore."

With a slight, scornful smile, my lady threw away her anger, grew quite calm, and rode on by his side again, still sometimes smiling to herself.

"I must have an interview with my good uncle," she muttered, after a long pause, with her old, mocking air. "Laird Tyndale's ways are not—as the Scriptures have it—are not my ways; and if he cuts out twisting and winding paths for my feet to tread, he shall explain more fully their signification to me. I object to be any man's tool. The happy Lady of Strathmore shall still claim a small interest in her own actions, and, begging my good uncle's pardon, those actions shall be more fully to her own mind before she enacts them. Cousin Robin, here's Golspie, and the steamer has arrived at the dock, and I can hear her hissing and roaring from here, and I can see her red funnel over those fishermen's huts. Now, my cousin, if that steamer, coming from my own country, brings no friend for Kilmeny, proving that all those hearts she cherished are forgetful—if no face of old-time affection waits by that dingy steamer's side to meet me, I shall honestly wash my hands of the bitter past, and become Highland savage, if you like. Will that do, most kindly kinsman?"

"Bravo, my sweet cousin! I am almost cruel enough to hope——"

The young cavalier's words were here cut short by a very unexpected apparition in front of them.

Mounted upon a stout black cob, with tartan plaid waving in the wind, heavy steel bridle glittering in the sun, black velvet bonnet low down over his brows, came Laird Tyndale Strathmore, pricking up the winding road from the town to meet the pair.

Wily and ever watchful, the laird had extracted from An-



drew Thompson the particulars of my lady's message, mounted his horse, and taken the direct route from Bracken Hough to Golspie, seeing with hawk's eye and eagle intelligence the drift of my lady's intentions with the coming steamer.

So here he was on the ground before her, to console her pending disappointment perhaps.

"Heaven's benison on my fair niece!" cried the old man, with a courtly air, as the winsome couple rode down upon him. "And where goes Lady Kilmeny to-day?"

My lady seemed little troubled by awe of this old man, who could make the stoutest fisherman in Strathmore territory tremble by a silent glance of his gray eyes. She crested her haughty head, and regarded him eye to eye, and Laird Tyndale, who was as well aware of her intentions as she was herself, saw that it was diamond cut diamond.

"We are on our way to Golspie. Where may you be going, Lord Tyndale?" queried my lady, with mocking eyes.

"I'll turn my horse and accompany you, fair niece, unless I interfere in good company," answered the laird, with smiling significance.

Unconsciously Robin's blue eyes sparkled and leaped toward Lady Kilmeny at that, but she, with scornful amusement on her lips, still traveled on, looking at his father full in the face.

"You won't spoil good company," she said. "We were wrangling all the way down."

"And that's Scotch wooing," cried the laird, with a loud laugh.

"So," continued my lady, with never a change on her cold face, save deeper scorn and defiance, "considering that you came down all this way to intercept Robin and me in our visit to the steamer, and deprived yourself of your after-dinner nap, poor man, you shall make a third in the pleasant company; and won't we make a goodly three to welcome to Strathmore the blithe Lowland friend who comes all this way for Kilmeny's sending?"

With the gesture of a triumphant queen she sat upon her horse, gathering tight her white reins in one little nerved hand; and all the silver bells tinkled a fairy stream of defiance, and her black, coal-lit eyes shot forth daring exultation over her shoulder as she swept in front of father and son, leading off the cavalcade.



"She needs a bringing down, and she'll get it!" muttered Laird Tyndale, flushing in spite of himself at her utter fearlessness.

"Don't answer her, father!" entreated Robin, with remorse at his own harshness stirring in his softening eyes. "The poor lass has a hard time of it, between loss of all she loved and our rough exactions."

"Did she speak to you about her friends?" demanded the old laird, anxiously. "Has she been filling your ears with nonsense?"

"She has told me nothing but that she thinks more of her Aberdeen grandmother and grandfather, and printer-lad, than she does of Sutherland; and that one of them lands here to-day."

"Oh, she's a wilfu' queen!" ejaculated Tyndale, shaking his fist at the serene figure ambling in front of them, but withal having a certain glow of admiration for her, in his vengeful glance, "and she'd have her say and make her way, should Strathmore fa' about her ears, but saftly, my lady Spunkie—saftly, bonnie May, it's no aye the sourest tree that has the sweetest fruit; you'll be none the waur for a down-coming."

"Father," said Robin, with a troubled face, "what harm would this friend's coming to cheer Kilmeny do?"

"S'death, man!" growled the father, in response—"so much the worse for them if they show their faces among glooming, grumbling Strathmore men, with souls made up of superstition and hearts of vengeful truthfulness. So much the worse for us if our plans are crushed before my lady is truly *our own*, to cry loudest defiance fearlessly to our foes, Robin, boy"—the old man's hand came down on his son's, and a look of deep intelligence crept to his wary face—"Robin, boy, you've but to touch the sparks in your girl's fiery will—*win her for yours*—and the danger's past, and she's ours, body and soul, to hurl the alien from her possessions, and save the doomed house of Strathmore."

Hotly flushed the young man's cheek. He looked up the road and down the road, from rolling sea surf to rippling meadow fields, but no rest could he find for his roving eyes save on Lady Kilmeny's fluttering skirt twenty paces ahead.

"I can't do it, father," he muttered. "She clings to me more than to Gavin or Kenneth; but it's not for love. I



can't betray her confidence, and throw her back to lean toward none of us—I can't be so cruel as that.”

“She'll do queer things for pride's sake,” answered the laird, in a low voice. “Don't despair, Robin, but don your bravest gallantry after to-day's ride. We'll see.”

And with that he chirruped to his horse, and trotted on to join the lady in her impatient advance, and Robin, a little flushed yet, and half-timid, came up at her other side.

“Well, my good uncle, have you had your conference?” cried my lady, with scornful glances. “And is Kilmeny's farther path marked out for her to your satisfaction? and is Robin to be the string which ties her to your hand? and is she to be wheedled or driven, which? Don't, Uncle Tyndale, don't trouble explaining. We'll proceed with our little trip, which has been somewhat delayed. See how those fishermen and their wives stare at Strathmore's captive, as if they had never seen her warriors. Are they pitying me, eh, Uncle Tyndale?” and the strange girl laughed tauntingly, until her dark face grew rich with lovely carnation tints, although her eyes angrily glittered from window to door of cot and sheiling.

“Doubtless, my Lady Kilmeny hopes to hear flattering tidings from her old friends?” quoth Tyndale Strathmore, crafty and shy, not suffering her scathing scorn to flow over him quite unmatched. “Mayhap she expects good news, that she laughs so loudly? Mayhap she thinks to see *him*, that she's dressed so richly?”

With a scarlet tinge mantling her brow, my lady turned round and regarded the laird with one of those steady, unflinching scrutinies of hers which he found so difficult to withstand.

“How far do you dare to imagine I could stoop?” she breathed through her teeth; then, deigning to wait for no reply, she swept onward, turned her steed sharply down a side street, and entered the arched gate-way of the Lowland steamer dock, with her two kinsmen cantering at her back, a goodly sight to the crowds assembled there.

Few and far between were the ships of any size round the rude docks of Golspie town. What craft there were seemed nothing better than the black, tarred boats and punts of the fishermen themselves, with here and there a stout merchant ship, or a coasting lugger rolled into Dornock from stress of weather encountered on the boisterous North Sea. The



Aberdeen steamer, touching at Fraserburg, Poetsoy, and Cromarty, on its devious route, came four times a year to Highland Golspie, and formed about the staple connection between this out-of-the-way little city of the Gaels and her more polished sisters of the Lowlands.

For fully five minutes my lady had sat immovable as a statue upon her horse, with her face turned away from her two companions, and her whole attention seemingly absorbed by the scene before her, utterly heedless of the general and intense interest which her presence created. They could not guess what was working in that fiery brain; they might not understand the secret tumult and sickening of that brave heart.

When she turned to speak, her face was pallid and strained, her lips unsteady, in spite of the fierce gnawing of her sharp teeth upon their scarlet wreathing.

“Go, Robin,” said Lady Kilmeny, with a strong effort—“go on board, and fetch my friend!”

And Robin, troubled enough, but scarcely liking to suggest a word, dismounted from his horse, and disdaining to wait for the gang-way to be cleared for him, seized a halyard and sprang lightly on deck, with his message.

In spite of himself, a crafty smile glimmered over Tyndale Strathmore’s face. Calmly and coolly, Lady Kilmeny bent her eyes upon him, and saw it.

“What amuses the Laird Tyndale?” she demanded.

Slightly disconcerted, he drew back from her fixed gaze, but soon rallied, none the sweeter for his momentary disadvantage.

“Does my lady forget how she came into my hands?”

“My kind kinsman to remind me, I do not forget.”

“I was calling it to mind, lady niece, and it made me smile.”

“Does treachery make you smile, Tyndale Strathmore?”

“No; but the forgiveness of a weak woman’s heart does, my lady.”

“All were not treacherous, sir, neither are all forgiven; so save your mirth, my good uncle. I sent a letter to a friend, but it was a woman, and as long as I believe her and hers to be interested in my welfare, I shall return the interest to the full.”

“You have yet to learn from them what you winna believe from me—that your’re too soft-hearted, proud as you



are. Kilmeny, there's no one of them cares where ye are, or would come this distance to see you. You'll see."

My lady looked at him. Perhaps a wild doubt started just then through her soul, for she gasped and clenched one hand hard upon her heart.

"I won't believe it—I won't!" she cried, almost pleadingly.

"Now, my lady," said Tyndale Strathmore, with a cunning look, "what's the use of building so much of your bonnie heart on a feckless auld grandfather and a doited auld grandmother, who——"

With a curl of the lip my lady wheeled from him, mayhap with a prescience of a third presence, for the messenger was standing behind her alone.

"There was no passenger for my Lady of Strathmore," said Robin, with downcast eyes. "The people who came to-day were all from Nairn, and have gone up to the Orkneys. Don't despair, though, Cousin Kilmeny; we'll go up to the post-office; the mails are opened by now."

"Yes, we'll try the post-office," echoed the laird, twisting his gray mustaches and quietly smiling.

With a quiet, almost bewildered look back at the hissing steamer, and the shouting crowd, Lady Kilmeny followed her escorts off the pier up the smoky street and down a noisy thoroughfare to the post-office, and ere they stopped before the door, the postmaster came out with a letter in his hand which, with a low reverence to the lady of Strathmore, he delivered to her.

She looked at it, and she looked in the pitiless face of her crafty kinsman with a faint, anguished smile of attempted triumph, and she turned to the anxious, sympathetic face of her Cousin Robin as if for some small support, and then she toyed with the sealed initials on the envelope.

Without a word the laird led the way out of Golspie to the steep, ascending shore-road toward home, and his silent companions followed mechanically. Then Tyndale Strathmore glanced once at his niece's still face and tightened the reins in his hand.

"Read it," he said, then put spurs to his horse and left her undisturbed.

Robin also, with uneasy glances, deviated on to the heathery moor, and left my lady with her letter.



She tore it open, and read with lightning speed each page.

A long and elaborate letter it must have been, for she went over it again and yet again, as if its meaning could not pierce her slow brain; and she weighed each word and studied each word so long that the city of Golspie was far behind before my lady looked up from her Lowland news. And she gazed out over the sea, with eyes which burned like great lamps within some fragile porcelain vase, for her face was thin and whiter than the breast of each curling wave, and colder than the rocks which were washed by the beating surf and dried by the bitter wind from the north, and the moaning of a great desolation was burning like corpse-lights in those wild eyes.

My lady strained her palfrey's bridle with a vehemence which sent every silver bell jingling in merry company, and like an arrow she shot forward, with a terrible laugh, low and ominous, past the astonished laird leisurely trotting on ahead, and the dumfounded Robin, picking his way idly across a peat-morass, onward, fleetly and wildly, with a terrified horse, which spurred the turf in clods behind him, through the jagged whins and the sharp sand-pass to the edge of a high crag where the sea-gulls whirled in eddies, and the sand-martins built their nests, and the crawling foam shoaled into shiny caverns full fifty feet below.

"Stop, stop, Kilmeny!" shouted Robin Strathmore, white with horror, and smiting his horse with desperate cruelty as he plunged helplessly deeper into the surging morass.

"Fly father, fly! She'll do it! Fly, for Heaven's love!" he cried.

And the wily schemer of this family stood up in his stirrups, and looked at his niece struggling fiercely with her affrighted steed on the confines of the awful caldron, and grasping the sweet musical reins with angry hands, and scourging the animal as it reared shuddering upon its haunches, and for a moment his face blanched as he thought perhaps he had drawn the strain with too sudden a hand on this wild scion of his blood. But he soon rallied, and rode over to help his son with a calm air of assurance.

"Whist, Robin!" he rejoined, seizing his horse by the bridle, and landing him upon a solid rock; "dinna fear, dinna fear. Yon lassie has got oure muckle grit to gang



oure the rocks for spite. Haud awa, Robin lad, and see how the dose works."

"What have you done, father?" demanded the young man, with a trembling voice, "what made you meddle with the lassie to drive her to this distraction? What's come o'er Kilmeny?"

"Wait, Robin, wait. It maun aye be a storm before there's a calm. She'll be a brave, bonnie lady to Strathmore after this—see, my lady's conquered at last."

The figure on the precipice ceased the unequal strife with her horse. She soothed him with coaxing hand, and flung away her jeweled riding-whip, and when he stood motionless, and docile as a lamb, she plucked the ill-fated missive from her belt, held it aloft, and with clutched hand raised, and her eyes upon heaven's highest dome, seemed to register a vow.

Then the letter was torn into a thousand pieces, and the wild wind bore them whirling among the circling sea-birds, and my Lady Kilmeny turned her horse, and walked softly back to her kinsmen. She held a hand out to each of them, and, with quiet words, thus she spoke:

"I have cast off the old life, and Heaven has my vow. Take me, uncle and cousin, and devote me to your house. Kilmeny Strathmore shall be the maid to avert your 'double doom.'"

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE GEM DROPPED FROM THE CIRCLE.

Alexander Buccleugh was very ill—so desperately ill that he lay in the quietest bed-chamber of Lady-Bank for two days, without consciousness enough to look up at Florice weeping over him, and anxiously watching him night and day.

As the captain had said, if anything could rouse Florice, the greater suffering of Alexander could rouse her; she hung on his breath, and counted the feeble flutterings of his pulse with intensest anxiety.

It seemed as if in the great shock which had riven heart from heart, these two poor, bleeding souls clung to each other with fondest fidelity, and each tried to fan the sinking flame as the torch burned low.



There were pallid faces of anxious import, and an awful hush through the house of sorrow, as the inanimate sufferer lay in that long, dread trance; and the slow, drooping hours seemed but to deepen the heavy shadows round the closed eyes; and the physician, with a serious face, took his diagnosis and left his prescription, and rode away with many a sigh.

The captain, poor, oppressed soul, tortured with suspense, and scourged by remorse, wandered in and out, undoing Mrs. Ellathorne's careful arrangements, glowing with his beaming blue eyes down at his fallen friend, grieving over his Florice's fatigue, and perpetually proving unmanageable to the pale, depressed Jessie Buccleugh.

And meantime, what of the gay Lady Tresilyan?

The captain scanned in vain every passenger list and *on dits* of high life in the fashionable gazettes and journals, but saw no announcement of Lord and Lady Tresilyan's departure; and at last, on the third day, he girded up his reluctant soul and made a descent on Holyrood, and inquired for Lord Tresilyan.

"Lord Tresilyan and his suite of attendants left the palace last evening, at precisely seven o'clock, to join the queen at Balmoral, as far as I understand," was the answer of the servitor who answered his knock.

"Only last evening?" exclaimed the captain, thunder-struck.

"Her ladyship was indisposed since Thursday evening, which delayed their starting then, and she only recovered sufficiently to be removed last evening."

"Can you tell me how long his lordship proposes remaining at Balmoral?"

"I cannot, sir; there was some talk of their proceeding to the Highlands, but whether the arrangement will be carried out, I cannot say. I only gathered what knowledge I possess from his lordship's valet."

The captain contrived to thank the man for his civility, and turned away, utterly defeated.

It was undeniable now — Glencora had undisguisedly thrown them off; she had scoffed at his earnest request for one interview to save her honor, and had washed her hands of them all, in cold blood, with no attempt at even a message to her outraged sister.

She had climbed up to grandeur on the neck of little



Florice, and left her to pine into her grave under the shock; and at the thought of that, poor Anthony's fiery temper got the better of him once more.

"Let her go!" he cried, shaking his hand vindictively. "She's not worth our sorrowing and searching after. Let her go, all sails set and a stiff breeze, if she likes. She'll drift into the whirlpool some time, as she ought to do, and we'll cast our anchor in calm water without her. Ah, poor Buccleugh! heavy'll be her reckoning if he founders in this storm!"

When Captain Drummond returned to his woeful house in bonnie Gower lane, there was a stern resolve in his demeanor.

He came among his little family and spoke to them all in this manner :

"When Glencora Calvert was lost to us we mourned for her sorely, and searched for her untiringly; and that was right, for we believed her worth our grief and our searching. But now, I've proved it over and over again, that our lost girl whom we mourned so sorely went of her own free will and pleasure—that she looks with disgust back on her innocent life with us, and that she desires all connection to cease between us. Come here, girlie, your little face is white and thin—you'll listen to what Anthony says, and know that it's for your good, will you, girlie? Hester, you are the calmest and most dispassionate here; I've always followed your judgment, sister. Well, do you think we've wasted enough precious love on an ingrate?"

"I don't know, brother. Oh, don't expect me to feel that way!" sobbed Mrs. Ellathorne, quite breaking down for the first time. "I can't think of Glennie as any other than what she seemed to us—my heart's pride—oh, Anthony!"

"But it's right!" broke in Jessie Buccleugh, fiercely; "look at these wrecks of happiness—look at my cousin sick to death in yonder bedroom—look—look at Florice's thin face—realize your own heavy anguish and say if it is just that tears be shed for the betrayer alone. Let us care for our own broken-spirited loved ones, and tie up the loyal circle without envying the presence of a traitress."

Captain Drummond looked at the girl's fair, spirited face, her sparkling eyes, and golden hair flung proudly back upon her curving neck, and as a remembrance of what he



had known between her and Alexander stole upon him, he thought perhaps it might be well that it should be so, for she was loyal to the core.

“And what says girlie?” whispered the captain, supporting his poor crushed rose with gentle arms.

She raised her meek, suffering eyes to him for a moment, with a look which smote him cruelly.

“My sister has been very hard to us,” moaned Florice, “and has showed us a strange distrust in avoiding our confidence as she has done, and this being the case, we should cease pursuing her until she comes to us of her own accord and explains her reasons, which I assure you she will do in spite of her apparent heartlessness, as soon as it is possible; but oh, Anthony, don’t ask us to close our hearts against her—remember she is always my beloved sister, whatever her faults, and as long as I am in this family circle, her place must be kept for her at my side.”

“And what if Alexander dies?” spoke up Jessie, with knitted brows.

“Jessie, hush!” exclaimed Florice, raising her hand with sudden reproof; “you are too harsh and often seem to forget that she is my sister. This might never have happened if——”

The words died on her lips; could she be so ungenerous as to sting her friend with a knowledge of the estrangement she had caused?

“I implore you, Jessie,” she continued, more gently, “to think more kindly of Glencora than you do. Alexander, who of us all has suffered the deepest anguish, still clings to her good faith toward him, unshaken; his whole being is enwrapped by a belief in her innocence, and you see how near he has been brought to the end by a doubt being cast upon her. Let him have his trust unbroken until he is strong enough to bear the trial, and erase those cold innuendoes, which, even in his terrible prostration, have more than once flushed his face with agony. We have all been wronged, but you, Jessie, who suffer least, why should you blame most?”

The girl turned abashed from Florice’s fiery regard, and averted her face from them all to look down the sunny avenue; and perhaps a foreboding remorse blanched the pink in those rounded cheeks, for she shivered and held the curtain back with a shaking hand.



“We’ll devote our present energies to bringing back poor Alexander to health,” said Mrs. Ellathorne, “and we’ll love each other all the better that the circle is so small.”

So the shorn little circle dispersed again, and Florice went back to her self-constituted task as sick-nurse, to soothe and animate, by every judicious act, the now restless and feverish invalid whose alternations of excitement and depression were something terrible to behold.

Arduous as were little Florice’s duties, she clung to them with a pertinacity which never flagged, and which perhaps saved her from becoming hopelessly melancholy.

Truly her devotion to Alexander was the unction which prevented her sick heart from bleeding itself to death, and the bitterest trial which could befall her in those silent days was the frequent determination of Jessie Buccleugh to relieve her of her patient for a day or two, and as she generally succeeded in carrying her point, poor little Florice would make a day of mourning of it, weeping in her lover’s tender arms, or grieving sadly on her little bed, where she strove to catch the balm of slumber.

Now, it fell on a Sunday, nine days after Alexander had been taken ill, and when the crisis of his malady was at hand, that Miss Buccleugh announced her intention of taking her turn at the side of her cousin, and nothing would satisfy her but that Florice must go to church with the captain.

“Not a word, Florice,” said Jessie, who could be very willful at times. “You are bleached with confinement, and have kept vigil for two nights. Get away into the sunshine and I’ll take care of my cousin, and Mrs. Ellathorne shall sit with me to watch for any change if you are afraid of me. She shall go with you, sha’n’t she, captain?”

Anthony being thus put up to it, pleaded hard, and Florice, with a tender look for him, but a heart that was like to break, slowly went up stairs to prepare.

With what listless fingers she braided her brown hair, and banded it plainly under her simple white bonnet; absently she directed the stupid but good-natured waiting-maid to assist her toilet.

It is to be observed here that it was no longer Jean Malcolm, but a strong country lass somewhere from Elgin, who now officiated as Miss Calvert’s maid. Malcolm had taken her departure about four weeks ago to enjoy quite a com-



fortable legacy of a farm and house in Cornwall which had been left her by an English cousin. This legacy had caused her to depart very suddenly, just the evening before Mr. Wynde had strolled out to Lady-Bank to honor the lady's-maid with a special call, which was unfortunate, for the tortuously inclined gentleman seemed grievously disappointed at being too late at least to bid her good-by.

The sweet-toned bells of every church and chapel were pealing forth their gracious invitation, when Florice and Anthony Drummond, having walked rapidly down to the city, entered the first house of prayer in their way, and sank with the dying chimes to offer brief homage to their great High Priest.

There were ladders of tinted sunshine streaming across chancel and aisle from the oriel windows, and the great organ pealed a seraphic Handel chorus.

Then a gentle hush, a rustle and sigh, as the immense multitude knelt and the service began.

At first Florice devoted herself strictly to her devotions, joining reverently and softly in the murmuring response, and not until the sermon had commenced did her eye wander from the little blue velvet prayer-book, and the captain's brown hand holding it for her.

Captain Drummond was sitting, certainly it must be confessed, in a very quiescent mood, but quite conscious yet, and listening with much edification to his simple soul, and agreeing in his innocent heart to every word uttered by the bland clergyman, when he was all at once transported from the vague, indistinct field of the abstract to the startling, ever thrilling turmoil of the present.

A hand came down like a steel-trap upon his own, cold, vibrating, convulsive in its grief; a face wild, white, and insignificant, looked up into his, and two straightly leveled eyes still streamed forth their intense gaze beyond him into the middle aisle of the building.

“Heavens, Florice! What—*what?*”

The captain could gaze no more. Two or three turned round their heads to look at him, and he was fain to keep silence, for he was one of your men who did not know how to whisper, but seeing that she seemed deaf to his question he followed the direction of her eyes, hoping to find the solution of her startling expression.



Going slowly from pew to pew, his eyes rested on one in which were four persons.

The first near the door was a stout, portly gentleman, in full military costume. General Malmsbury he knew him to be, and apparently that was his pew.

The next occupant was a tall, distinguished-looking person, with an extremely pale, classical face, large, penetrating violet eyes of singular power, a slight, drooping mustache, and brown, crisp locks, wreathing back from a very fine brow; the expression of this face was very remarkable; the commingling of hauteur and gentleness, command and playfulness, severity and tenderness, would have puzzled a much more skilled physiologist than Captain Drummond. He looked at the two ladies.

One instantly set his heart beating. He had seen that face before, with its melting violet eyes, its carmine cheeks, and its heavily braided coronet of amber hair. Graceful and elegant as before, but more queenly looking in her enforced gravity and sobriety of demeanor, sat Lady Clara Tresilyan, with her eyes on the clergyman and her gold-clasped church service between her fingers.

But her companion—what was she?

For a moment the captain's heart melted as if with fire, and a tremulous haze before his eyes hid their object from his view; then, with a mighty effort, he surmounted his agitation and surveyed her calmly.

A velvet curtain, half-drawn, hid her from most of the congregation, but her half-averted face was fully revealed to him, and at last—at last he beheld what was no more sweet, lost Glencora, but brilliant Lady Tresilyan.

Yes, there she was, fair as ever, gayer than ever, blooming, proud, triumphant. Her face was rounded into curving dimples; her eyes wore a merrier, more arch glimmer in their delicious depths than before, and positively—my lady looked as if life had just commenced to be worth having, when she fled from the sphere heaven gave her, and spurned the hearts that heaven blessed her with.

With one long, astounded stare, Captain Drummond took in this much, and dropped his eyes, dazed with the flash of my lady's diamonds, to my lady's pale sister at his side.

"Florice—it's *she*," he muttered.

The little sister raised her soft eyes for a moment to his



face, and her generous sisterly devotion spoke out in her whispered entreaty:

“Don’t, guardie—don’t judge her. She hasn’t seen us yet.”

“She’ll not complain of that long,” vowed the captain, arranging himself so as to face her directly, and resuming his survey.

If Captain Drummond had been a keen physiologist, he would have been ten times more amazed at the changing expressions of that lovely face than he was, deep as was his astonishment. There was no shadow of apprehension or uneasiness—no sign ever so artfully veiled of hidden fear, to be traced in my lady’s glances, as now and again she swept a quiet gaze round the majestic building, and marked here a face to be studied, there a painted window to admire.

She had been here in this church long ago with her guardian, when little Florice came up the aisle, holding her hand and looking over the pew-doors with wide, childish eyes, and they had sat in this very seat where now he and the shadow of that former laughing Florice were sitting to-day. Did that by-gone memory of purer days flit back to my lady’s thoughts, as idly her eyes roamed about and fastened on central points of interest?

There was an indescribable change in her appearance, the watchful captain marked, but failed to define it.

It seemed as if an impalpable veil had been thrown daintily over the vivid display of feelings which were wont to sparkle on Glencora Calvert’s features.

“Small marvel in that,” thought the captain, scorningly. “Dissimulation is her daily food, and she must have been a finished actress before she left us.”

There was a bland, even honeyed expression about her mouth and brow, which, taken in connection with her large, careless, arch eyes, was indescribably fascinating, and every queenly movement asserted easy independence and much vivacity of character.

“How *can* she keep it up?” wondered straightforward Anthony. “She must be a sorceress. Why, if I’d never seen that woman before, I’d swear she was radiantly happy.”

My Lady Tresilyan turned her sumptuous head, and every cunning spray of simulated dew-drops on her marvelous



French *coiffeur* flashed like trembling sparks, and her velvet black eyes fell on Florice Calvert, straight and unfaltering.

Calm, sweet, and interested was that glance, then with a coming shadow of suppressed concern in her lovely eyes, she glanced over at the pale, clear-cut face of my Lord Audley opposite, and conveyed his regards to the little plebeian sister, and smiled.

Ah, poor Florice! With a start, and a shuddering gasp she shrank back, with her tender heart pierced through and through; then, as if she could not believe Glencora's heartlessness, she turned one long, wistful look upon my lady, and face to face they regarded each other at last, over the impassable gulf which treachery had placed between them.

Lady Tresilyan was really much interested; she bent forward, and with an amiable half-smile, she seemed trying to make friendly overtures to the little girl in the white bonnet, over the breadth of the church, and as my lord had been called upon to examine the stranger too, he looked at her condescendingly with his penetrating violet eyes, as if it was a very pretty little face indeed, and then, with a quick glance at lowering-faced Captain Drummond, he looked over to his fair lady, and they exchanged glances. Then while Florice sank back for the last time, and lifted up her face no more, gay Lady Tresilyan whispered in my Lady Clara's ear, and she turned her Spanish-looking face to look at the plebeian's, and instantly began to communicate something very volubly to her ladyship, her eyes fixed on Florice's face all the time, and my lady looking amused, until an interruption came in the shape of the people rising up, and the organ preluding for the closing hymn.

"Courage, my girl," muttered Anthony Drummond, drawing the mechanical form of Florice before a pillar, in order to secretly support her with his arm. "We're not browbeat yet. I'll unmask yon painted hypocrite if the lordling should drive his coach and span over me. They've got no cockle-boat to deal with."

Slowly the mass of people began to move out. Captain Drummond remarked with some relief that the aristocrats in the general's pew still kept their seats, and he also noticed with an indescribable sensation of anger, that Lord Tresilyan had risen and drawn the velvet curtain quite



across the rail, thus shielding completely the fair face of my lady from the gaze of the common people.

As the crowd became less dense, Anthony gave Florice his arm, and leisurely made his way out among the last.

"Be strong now, girlie," he whispered; "be strong for *one last effort* to move yon heart of flint."

They walked down through the church-yard and the rows of yew trees; they walked through the groups of richly-dressed people into the street, and after one glance up and down the long line of carriages in waiting for the worshippers, the grim captain walked up to a splendid barouche, brilliant with silver trappings and armorial bearings, with two white, prancing steeds, two postilions and a flunky, all drawn up beneath a spreading cedar.

With a bitter, sneering eye, Anthony Drummond surveyed all this grandeur, and its luxuriance was not oil to the waters.

With a quick movement one of the postilions mounted his horse, crying:

"My lord waits."

The other followed his example, the flunky mounted behind, and my lord's equipage swept round, taking up all the broad street, and drew up close to the curb-stone at the iron gate, so that my lady's dainty foot might touch as little of plebeian ground as possible.

General Malmsbury gallantly handed Lady Clara to her seat, and the brilliant pair behind the railings emerged, with a sweep of sheeny silks and priceless lace, and the pair outside the railings also drew near, and confronted my lord and lady at last.

"Glencora!" sighed Florice, in a rushing whisper.

My lady was gathering the folds of her robe, her prayer-book, bouquet, and parasol in one hand, preparatory to giving her other to my Lord Tresilyan, thus to enter the carriage, and she turned her face quite the other way to laugh in silver tones.

"Now, general, it requires as much maneuvering as you would exercise to form a double square of raw recruits, for me to arrange all this miscellany of religion and vanity. Ah! thanks, general. Now, my lord."

Her delicate foot rested on the polished step, her dainty hand rested on her husband's palm, but my lord was looking round haughtily, for a fierce, threatening face came



between them, and the drooping figure of the little girl in the white bonnet had disappeared behind the portly form of General Malmsbury.

“Girl, have you the heart to go in this way?” ejaculated Anthony Drummond; almost choking with indignation. “Can you dare me to my face, traitress?”

My lady turned pale, as well as she might, and eyed him wildly. For a brief moment the bland mask was dropped, and my lady was looking at this interloper with consternation.

“Beware, sir!” exclaimed Lord Tresilyan. “Stand back, and do not interfere with her ladyship.”

“I claim her as a member of my house,” uttered the unfortunate captain, stamping his foot. “I demand one interview on behalf of——”

“Enter, Lady Tresilyan,” said my lord, in a low tone.

He hurried her in, took the carriage-door in his hand, thus guarding the entrance, and looked full in the captain’s face with his calm, electrical eyes.

“If once you exercised authority over her, you cannot do so now, sir. I acknowledge she was of your family once, but she is my wife now, and under my protection. If you have any proposals to make, write to her ladyship and explain your mode of action. I have no doubt justice will be done you; but excuse me if I permit no such interview as you demand to take place on Sunday, and in the public streets of Edinburgh.”

He bowed low, gave a signal to the postilions, entered the carriage, and slammed the door, and in an instant the gay equipage was rolling down the street, but not before a certain sentence of my lady’s reached the stunned ears of Captain Drummond:

“Audley—oh, my lord, he is an impostor! I never saw him before. Don’t believe him.”

And then the slightly blanched face of lovely Lady Tresilyan flashed out for a last glance at her deserted confronter, and the little sister was for a second time forsaken.

And, perhaps for the first time in his life, Anthony Drummond, white as chalk with passion, uttered a fierce imprecation as he snapped his stout cane in two, dashed it on the ground, and spurned the broken pieces with his foot.



“As these fragments lie in the dust, so lies her memory beneath our scorn!” aspirated he, between his teeth. “Drop her name from your heart, my girl. Let her be as dead to us. She’ll never more be troubled by those she has deserted.”

And Florice, with her head drooping to her bosom, her face calm and cold, answered never a word, but walked by her guardian’s side, awakened from her dream of trust, through the parish streets and the flowery lane to Lady-Bank. And thus it was that the gem was dropped from love’s circle at last.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE WRAITH OF STRATHMORE.

The crisis has passed. Alexander still lives, and scarcely lives.

How shall those pitiful hearts that love the wreck of spirited manhood as they never loved its prime, fan the feeble spark into stronger glowing, and hold him still on the earth that had proved too bitter for him.

“Off with you to Dysart, and bathe in the healthy brine!” counseled old Dr. Potion, the merry and wise. “No confederation with the rebel Grief here, sir; get away and fight with the salt foam and the green sea, till you’re too tired to mind aught.”

So as soon as he was able to be moved, Captain Drummond carried him off to the quaint old town of Dysart, where the walks were fairest and the bathing best, and where quiet brooded like a heavenly somnolence, unbroken by aught but dreams of tenderest nature.

The captain located him in an obscure boarding-house, with an old lady of the name of Mrs. Reid, who, from the first moment that she saw her pale lodger stepping from the Kirkcaldy cab and coming to her little boarding-house leaning meekly on the arm of the stalwart captain, regarded him with watchful sympathy and the kind tyranny of a mother’s care.

The captain, promising to come over from Edinburgh every day to see him, and, wringing his white, wasted hand with an access of brimming pity, hurried away to hide his



swelling heart, and Alexander stretched himself on the white chintz sofa in Mrs. Reid's cool, dark parlor, and closed his aching eyes, once more drifting alone with his grief on the sullen waters of his changed life-stream.

And then the sweet September days crept on, and the unhappy man crept out of his dreamy retreat to wander with trembling limbs over the golden sands and to sit in a sunny nook on the western sea line between Dysart and Wemyss—a sunny nook in a cleft of the hoary rock.

Here, on beds of brackens, day by day, lay Alexander, till a sturdy step, scrambling over briny rock and ripland tarn, would warn him of the approach of the captain, who had come to sit down by him, with cheery face and hearty voice, and comfort him.

Gradually, as Alexander gained strength, he extended his walks.

One day he went down toward Kirkcaldy to meet the captain, whom he expected by the noon boat, and having traversed the distance (four miles) rather too hastily, and finding himself some thirty minutes too soon, he turned aside from the beach, which way he had gone, in preference to the turnpike, and entering Lord Roslin's grounds was fain to lay himself down on a grassy bank by the gravelly walk, overhung by a spreading yew.

The air was very sweet; Alexander's head ached exceedingly; his head was heavy with the noon sun and wind, and he fell asleep with his book for a pillow.

And as he slumbered, deep and dreamless, two ladies tripped daintily down the level walk.

They paused at the foot of the spreading yew, where lay the unconscious sleeper, and with arrested eyes they noted the motionless figure.

"Asleep?" whispered one, pointing to his pale face, half concealed by his arm. The other bent over him with sweet concern, to listen to his faint breathing.

"Truly he seems to be too motionless to be only asleep, poor gentleman!" replied she, quickly. "I wish the gentlemen would come away from their prosy discussion and speak to this person."

In uttering this her voice unconsciously rose, and the next instant Alexander started from his slumber, raised himself on his elbow, and looked up at his disturber.

And, oh, is heaven good to him at last! Oh, breaking



heart, break not yet. Oh, blinding eyes, fail not for one sweet moment, for is not this, once more under heaven, lost Glencora?

She gazes at his entranced face, his thin, sorrow-bleached face, once so comely; his rapt eyes dwell on her own, and she stands confused, with wistful silence. Will she breathe no little word to this old time love, to teach him she is noble still, and faithful to her vows? Her hand is stealing to her companion's arm; she turns her lovely face away in sore perplexity. Will she leave him so?

"Does Glencora remember me no more?" whispered Alexander, with parched lips.

His sudden gesture detained her more than his words. She could scarcely have heard them. Alexander had started to his feet, and leaned trembling against the yew, tall, feeble, and impassioned.

"Are you in trouble, sir?" replied the lady, sweetly, fearlessly retracing her step, and drawing her mobile-faced friend with her.

Alexander was leaning heavily on his staff, and it trembled under his hand. He read the imperious mark of seeming unconsciousness, and a cry broke from his outraged soul.

"Oh, Glencora!" wailed her ruined bridegroom.

She grew pale as death; her lustrous eyes were blinded with tears; her perfect lips contracted in a spasm of pain; her exquisite countenance faded from radiance to sharp dismay; the mask was dropped; another woman stood before him.

Then sudden amaze overspread the face of Alexander Buccleugh. He bent forward, and searched her orient eyes, her magnificent braid of jetty hue, her full, commanding figure, and bewilderment took the place of uncertainty.

"*Is this Glencora Calvert?*" cried he, wildly. "In Heaven's name, speak to me!"

"No, I am not Glencora Calvert," she replied, in a trembling voice. "I am Rosecleer Strathmore, married to Lord Audley Tresilyan."

The delicious gladness lost from her mellow tones, the rich carmine chased from her rounded cheek, she eluded the lover's recognition still further; the impalpable veil which the captain had observed thrown over the vivid display of feeling on Glencora Calvert's features seemed now



to darken into a perfect night of impervious disguise; two faces could scarcely express themselves more differently.

And Lady Tresilyan, the last of the four ladies of honor, was no more Glencora Calvert than her three companions.

Alexander drew back dizzily, and turned an ashy face from them. The revulsion of feeling was excruciating.

For where now was sweet Glencora?

Lady Tresilyan, with sudden resolution, turned from her silent interlocutor to Lady Clara, her sister-in-law, who, with quick intuition, had divined the truth, and understood the situation; and my lady said, with brave self-command:

“Clara, I beg you to go to the castle and send Audley here, that we may both hear this strange story; for, believe me, my dear, there is an awful significance involved in its meaning which my lord must interpret for me. You shall amuse the general while we confer, and I shall stay with this gentleman till my husband comes.”

Lady Clara pressed her hand in sympathy, and obediently withdrew; and my lady seated herself on the grassy bank under the yew, and gently requested Alexander to do the same.

Thus aroused from his bitter reverie, he nerved himself for an interview with this witching double of his bride, and sank down near her, with a profound sigh.

She was looking anxiously at him, her black, dilated eyes and troubled brows belying the enforced calmness with which she waited for her unknown companion to open the conversation.

He made an effort, and at last spoke.

“You are not she; you are her shadow—her twin. Lady Tresilyan, where is *she*?”

He spoke, but in unreasoning misery; but my lady clasped her white hands over her heart, and sat white as any hawthorn bud, with a low, shuddering cry escaping from pale parted lips.

“Who are you? What have you to do with my doom?” cried she, wildly.

“I am her betrothed; I seek my own. If you know anything about her who bears your likeness, line for line, I adjure you, Lady Tresilyan, to tell me. I have suffered more than such as you can understand.”

His feeble tones, his simple words and despair, wrung her heart.



"I know nothing of this lost lady whom you mistook me for. Alas, I cannot relieve your grief. But tell me, am I so very like her?"

The terror depicted on her face as she asked this, could not but arrest Alexander's attention. He examined her once more with torturing remembrance to guide him, and at the end of the survey replied, with deep emotion:

"Lady Tresilyan, so accurately are you her counterpart, that not only I, her husband-elect, believed you to be my betrothed, but her sister, on two occasions, saw and recognized you for Glencora Calvert, who had never been parted from her for more than a few months at a time. So close is the resemblance that Captain Drummond, her previous guardian, spoke to you in the street as the Glencora who had deserted us; and friends of unprejudiced judgment looked upon you and called you Glencora."

She leaned back faintly against the gnarled trunk of the yew, and passed her lawn handkerchief across her cold lips, before she could articulate her reply.

"This is very dreadful knowledge for me to learn," said she. "I dare scarcely suffer myself to reason out the meaning of such a fearful coincidence. Sir, allow me to address you by name."

"Alexander Buccleugh, my lady," uttered he, simply.

"Mr. Buccleugh, I feel intense relief on your account, though augmented horror on my own. Ever since the unknown gentleman accosted my husband and me in the street, I have been endeavoring to trace him out, that I might undeceive him on the point of my fancied identity with his lost friend. As he spoke that Sunday, both Lord Tresilyan and I supposed him to be some agent from my Highland House, which is at variance with me, seeking to interfere with my liberty, and it was not till Lady Clara, my lord's sister, recovered from her astonishment, and related the visit of Captain Drummond and Miss Florice Calvert to herself at the house of the Duchess of Airley, that we understood the mistake. Then it was too late to find him. Now, Mr. Buccleugh, believe me, I never knew of the existence of Miss Calvert, much less of her extraordinary likeness to myself, until these circumstances were brought to my knowledge as you have heard. From my heart I sympathize with your suspense and anxiety, and now it only remains to be seen whether I have not a right to share



both. How comes it to pass that the Highland Rosecleer, Lady of Strathmore, bears the same lineaments as Miss Calvert, the Edinburgh maiden. To me this is a fearful question."

Regarding him with eyes filled with gloom, and brows dark with suppressed consternation, my lady linked her gemmed and quivering fingers in her silken lap, and waited again for some possible ray of blessed light to pierce the gloom of her doubts.

"Let us leave the main question for a time," suggested Alexander, shaking off his own anguish at the spectacle of hers, "and fathom this mystery that troubles you so. May not such a resemblance be but coincidence?"

"Oh, that it was!" sighed she. "But, still, it is more than coincidence; that fact I already know. I pray you to give me more knowledge, that I may draw some conclusion speedily. Who is Glencora Calvert? Tell me her history, if you please."

"Lady Tresilyan, I can tell you nothing to clear up the marvel," began Alexander, thoughtfully. "Yet listen intently to the facts I shall recount, and satisfy yourself that I cannot. Miss Calvert and her sister were the daughters of a gentleman of the name of Howard D. Calvert, who was, some thirty years ago, a judge in India. He had married a Miss Lucy Drummond, a distant connection of the young Captain Drummond who accosted you in the street. On a visit home to Britain he saw her in Edinburgh, and determined to carry her back to Calcutta with him. They had been married two years before he proposed returning to his post; and, on the passage out, Glencora was born. Judge Calvert returned again to Edinburgh at the end of seven years, with his wife, Glencora, just then seven, and Florice, a baby of a few months of age. Mrs. Calvert was failing rapidly in the enervating climate, and only came home to die. On her decease, Mr. Calvert placed his children, prior to his last return to Calcutta, under the guardianship of the Rev. Mr. Ellathorne, a collage companion of his own, and life-long friend, who was married to Captain Drummond's only sister, Miss Hester Drummond. Mr. Calvert, shortly after his arrival in India, fell a victim to yellow fever; so the children were left in the house of Mr. Ellathorne till his death, after five years' guardianship, when he bequeathed the helpless orphans to the care of Anthony Drummond,



then a young sea-captain of twenty-two, the girls being, respectively, of the ages of twelve and five. They have both lived in his house in Gower lane, under the constant eye of Mrs. Ellathorne, until the twenty-fifth of last July, when we saw Glencora for the last time. Lady Tresilyan, what is there in this plain relation to cause you so much agitation?"

My lady's white hands, clasped in her silken lap, were strained together till the rosy nails were bloodless; her tremulous lips could scarcely frame a question.

"What age is Glencora Calvert?"

And Alexander, with a prescience of coming light, replied:

"She was twenty-four in May."

My lady's sharp, even teeth gnawed her blanched under lip; her great eyes flashed with superstitious terror; a thrill went through her quaking frame.

"And I was twenty-four in May!" gasped Lady Tresilyan. "Is that but coincidence?"

They gazed into each other's eyes, dumb with astonishment, wild fancy running riot; and these two, who had never before that day looked into each other's face, clasped trembling hands in spirit over the ocean of social difference and dark mystery that surged between them, drawing heart to heart by a missing link dropped from both their lives—the lost Glencora Calvert.

Alexander was the first to recover himself, and to exclaim, solemnly:

"My lady, search your past life, and tell me what you find for clearer knowledge of this secret."

"I have not far to search," replied my lady, in a hushed voice; "the knowledge meets me half way, and bears with it the doom pronounced on me by Strathmore House."

She shuddered, and turned a sick face from her agitated companion.

"What do you mean, Lady Tresilyan?" cried Alexander, vehemently. "Can you prove a connection between your house and Glencora's fate?"

"Ah, no!" sighed she, repressing tears; "but if what I am about to relate should prove the truth of my suspicions, what will I not endure to recover that vanished Glencora! Listen, Mr. Buccleugh, calmly if you can, and, I pray you, sift well my story, and extract its full significance. I am



the only child of Lord McGilloway Strathmore, of Sutherland, and the only remaining member of the direct line of lords belonging to that house. My mother died at my birth, slain, they say, by some subtle spell, to wash out the stain of some mysterious treason which she committed against Strathmore laws. Her name I never dared ask; her death was a thing to be spoken of with bated breath; and yet my lordly father mourned her sorely. At his decease, I, the one representative of the unmixed blood, took the title and the lands, under the guardianship of Sir Tyndale Strathmore, my father's youngest brother.

"I, however, hated Strathmore Tower, its legends, its superstitions, and its blind, ignorant devotion, and all my girlhood through I sighed for lowland life. I had an aged nurse, who vigilantly instructed me in every dread-inspiring prophecy anent the fortunes of my house, and on the occasions of my rebellious skepticism, she would wail the awful rhymes with prophetic zeal till I was at last silenced. This weird preceptress had one unearthly weapon with which to subdue me when everything material failed. She poisoned my life with a secret dread of some *doom* which was overhanging the House of Strathmore. 'If you fail in serving your clan, as your clan has need,' she said, 'the doom of the Double Roses shall overtake you.' What she meant I cannot say. She only wept and wrung her old hands when I asked. Yet I chose to prove disloyal, and to dare them all. I insisted on going to London four years ago to finish my education there, and the result was that I violated the oldest legend of my superstitious people. They say:

'When Strathmore May sal wed ayout the Tweed,  
Then down fair Strathmore fa's wi' hellish speed,  
But gif a Strathmore laird win Strathmore bride,  
Then back for aye dour ruin mirk sal bride.'

In happy security, and with eyes open to the folly of all superstitions, and mind cleared from its gloom of lurking credulities, I married Lord Audley Tresilyan, an English courtier, and laughed at the fury of Sir Tyndale, and the disappointment of my three male cousins, one of whom, Strathmore fates had prescribed for my husband.

"In consequence of this step, embarrassments have thickened around me, my revenues have been stopped, my house disputes my claim any longer to be their head, they have invested my cousin Kilmeny, daughter of my father's se-





"YOU ARE NOT SHE. LADY TRESILYAN, WHERE IS SHE?"—(P. 152.)



HE TALKED ON HER OWN MATTERS FIRST, AND ABOUT HER FORMER POSITION.—(P. 80.)



cond brother, Colonel William Strathmore, of Aberdeen, with my rights; she usurps my title, she rules my lands, and they will marry her to Gavin, Kenneth, or Robin, Sir Tynedale's sons. But this is not all, the mysterious fate of my mother may be mine any day, and such fate will be preceded (so my nurse prophesied), by my meeting with a wraith of myself—a living mirror of myself, who will bring my doom to me:

“ ‘When Double-Roses bloom on Strathmore tree,  
Then double Doom the Strathmore House shall dree?’ ”

“ One of us two shall die, and that one shall be her who was disloyal to her house. I, Rosecleer Tresilyan, shall die when I look in the mirroring face of the wraith of myself, who is to confront me at last, and whether she is a living woman or a dead, a specter, or a being of flesh and blood, Heaven knows. This is my story—a terrible one, if we cannot interpret it into natural circumstance, and my heart which I thought so firmly intrenched in reason's skepticism, sinks and shudders in the fangs of the dreadest superstition.”

Alexander looked up, his thin face crimsoned with indignation.

“ My lady,” said he, impressively, “ there is either some wondrous miracle here or some gigantic fraud. Strathmore House appears to descend to jugglery to preserve the direct line intact. Your youthful mind has been cruelly worked upon by an unscrupulous guardian and an insane old woman, and my Lord Tresilyan had better take you from Scottish ground and look well to your life. Their ‘Doom’ is in their own hands—they will assassinate you as they assassinated Lady Strathmore, and call it a ‘subtle spell.’ ”

“ But Glencora Calvert, sir, my twin in age, my double in appearance, my wraith who is to find me out ‘when I wed ayout the Tweed,’ ” cried Lady Tresilyan, with unconscious keenness.

Alexander winced—his brain whirled.

“ Your *twin!* ” breathed he; “ twice has that little word been used—is there no meaning in it?”

And my lady's hands fell apart on either side, her lovely face flushed a glorious vermilion, her eyes blazed out their triumph.

“ You have spoken true!” cried she, breathlessly. “ You have interpreted in one word my life. This is Nurse McIntyre's meaning—this is the supernatural power my house



possesses over my fate. They have hidden my twin's existence that *Double Roses* might not bloom on Strathmore tree, yet have saved her life to rule mine if I should disappoint their schemes. Oh, it *must* be so; yet where is the proof?"

"And Strathmore House has not chosen Glencora Calvert your wraith to rule their lands, but Kilmeny Strathmore, your cousin?" observed Alexander, quietly.

They sat, the weight of a nightmare upon them, hope drifting far away, and only the blackness of horror under their feet, till through the sylvan glades and checkering sunshine, my lord approached alone.

He glanced at his lady, her ashy lips, and locked fingers. He glanced at Alexander's thin, truthful countenance and heavy dejection, and his penetrating eye gathered the keenness of steel; he reached the pair with the sovereign expression of calm intellect on his pale, haughty face.

In a few words Lady Tresilyan introduced Alexander, and explained the circumstances of their meeting, and reading those brave and patient eyes, my lord grasped his hand firmly, and sincerely spoke his pleasure in the interview.

"Now, my lord," said the disquieted lady, "sit here, and listen to a very strange pair of stories, and at their close you shall exercise those cool perceptions of yours, and give us a clear interpretation of the tangled maze."

Lord Tresilyan flung himself under the yews with my lady and Alexander Buccleugh, and the stories were quickly told.

"Mr. Buccleugh," said Lord Tresilyan, emphatically, "if we search from the Mull of Galloway to Dunnet Spead, this lady must be found. Glencora Calvert, the Edinburgh orphan, must be produced and placed side by side with Rosecleer, my wife. If it should be proved that they were sisters, born in an hour, shall wicked superstition keep them apart? My lady, what say you?"

With paling cheek but firm smile, she cried:

"Nothing shall frighten me from claiming my sister, if she is indeed my sister. Wraith or twin, we shall search well for her."

My lord took her hand, encouraging her, while he resumed:

"Mr. Buccleugh, let us leave the harassing ground of speculation, and join hands on the road to certainty; let us



find Glencora; let us see whether she is alive or dead, and *then* prove her parentage. Above all, let us observe profound secrecy in our search. The Strathmore Fox, Sir Tyn-dale, must not scent alarm and baffle us again. Yet who has foiled their cunning plot and stolen Glencora from us all? I protest I am unable to suggest a supposition. And which end of the trail shall we start from? Shall we start from Lady-Bank again, with the 25th of July to guide us, and once more traverse the ground you and your friends have so earnestly scrutinized, hoping to be aided to the proper object of suspicion by this light from the past? Or shall we attack the Fox in his hole, and sift Strathmore tactics until we know as much on the subject as they do?"

Alexander, eager and excited, reflected for a few minutes, then looked up with a faint smile.

"Come to-morrow morning to Lady-Bank yourselves, and see Captain Drummond and Florice Calvert, and with their counsel we shall all perfect a plan for immediate action. Till then, deliberate every possibility, as I shall do."

"Very good," responded my lord, with satisfaction. "It is time we combined forces for the attack. What! a woman with your name, Rosecleer! No two such could exist unless the same blood flowed in their veins."

Lord Tresilyan spoke with steady conviction in his tones, and his mesmeric influence carried Alexander, whether he would or not in the vortex with him. Both gentlemen gazed earnestly at my lady's noble countenance.

"Ah! shall we three ever welcome that mysterious fourth that belongs to us?" breathed my lady, with thrilling soul.

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## CHAPTER XV.

### WHAT WAS FOUND IN THE CORN-FIELD.

The tale was told. The stain of infidelity was lifted from the guiltless Bride-Elect, and her fate was still to discover.

Bright Rosecleer Strathmore had severed her personality forever from Glencora's, and in the severance had plunged her fate into wider obscurity, and she had rent, with a claiming hand, that loved one from her old-time ties, and called her *sister*.

Was she a sister, or was she a wraith?



The little conference broke up; the noble pair walked to the Kirkcaldy shore, where General Malmesbury, a charmed captive, remained by Lady Clara, and returned by the evening steamer to Edinburgh; and Alexander wearily strolled back to Dysart in the twilight.

On the way he met Captain Drummond, who had been seeking him in every imaginable nook along the rocky shore for two hours, having come over from Edinburgh in the boat succeeding that of the party to Ravenscleugh Castle.

Arm-in-arm these friends paced the sea-trod sands, and long and earnest was their conference.

And when the last weird suggestion of my lady's story had been recapitulated, then, for the first time, Captain Drummond broke the seal of silence he had so faithfully preserved over Mr. Hazeldean's story.

One thing he spared Alexander, the bitter knowledge of his former suspicions of him.

"You never, for a moment, connected Glencora Calvert with Moray Hazeldean's 'G. C.?' cried Alexander, when the tale was ended. "Surely that lady has nothing in common with the constant girl we have lost. *She* loved none but me; she never saw the lawyer's brother in mortal form, and the profile likeness is but some phantom of artistic perfection. Would I not have suspected this secret side of my darling's life? Would I not have met Moray Hazeldean on his own ground, and wrested his power over my betrothed from his dastard hand? Ah, Drummond, speak no more, if your words lead to such mirages in the brain."

"But the note, Buccleugh, the little note that Florice saw, and that answered to the passionate line which Hazeldean received?" said the captain, anxiously.

"Thank Heaven, I can disprove that!" responded Alexander, the hot blood suffusing his transparent brow. "There had been one subject, in the course of our intimacy, which Glencora and I disagreed on—Jessie Buccleugh's fortune. This was the cause of the only estrangement that ever came between us. On Tuesday morning, the day before our marriage day, the old subject was reverted to for the last time. 'Was I *sure* I would never regret my infatuation? Was I *sure* that Jessie did not love me?' Glencora, with great, black eyes wildly seeking mine, and her face



flashing with intense emotion, stood aloof and asked me this; and I, cut to the heart by anything that looked like doubt on her part, answered passionately, rebuking her mistrust. She broke down and came to me like a child, and, laying her head on my arm, sobbed out her joy that I loved her so truly. She did not say much then, but when I had gone to the Bank (I was on my way thither) I received a note from Glencora, sweetly confessing the wrong she did my fidelity, and ingenuously promising never again to look on the contested subject but through my eyes. Then we met in the evening, and the difference was forgotten, and I lost her. Drummond, I can show you that note; I will do so, and its date will prove what I say."

"Man, I won't look at a line of it—I don't want to see it," cried the captain, warmly. "I believe every syllable you say as I believe the blessed Bible itself. Wherever she is, I'll now believe her guiltless as an angel till her guilt is proved. But oh, man, this is a woeful labyrinth!"

They were sitting on a rock, whose slimy base was washed by the incoming tide. The gloaming had deepened into summer night, and the salt breeze blew in their weary faces.

Suddenly Alexander seized the startled captain by the shoulder with a clutch like a vise.

"Drummond!" hissed he, "if that story were true, would it not convict me of—of murdering my bride?"

Captain Drummond felt his honest face flame with conscious blood; how acutely he had once argued on that fact. And here was the man he had suspected, having discussed everything else, he had at last thought of himself, and become aware of the abyss.

"Whist, man, ye're mad!" cried the captain, angrily. "No man shall say that word of you while I am above the ground. Tut, Buccleugh, don't fight with shadows; that story is disposed of; think no more of it."

"Will nothing turn you against me?" breathed Alexander, curiously.

And the captain replied:

"If all the world should suspect you, I can't—I *can't*."

He reiterated the word with the most vehement emphasis, and his heart went with it too.

"Drummond, I could not prove my innocence if called to do so," exclaimed Alexander, much moved.



The captain placed one trembling hand on his friend's breast, the other on his own.

"Alexander Buccleugh," protested he, solemnly, "my heart reads yours, throb for throb, and reads nothing but uprightness. Time was," sad he, sadly, dropping his hands to his knees and averting a remorseful face, "that I could mistrust and have my doubts even of you, but since then I've seen your soul laid bare in affliction's furnace, and I know you now as I know myself. Come in, man; it's late for an invalid to be out."

Captain Drummond abruptly rose, dragging Alexander with him, and hurried him into his little boarding-house from the ocean mists.

He ministered to him with the tenderness of a woman, waited on him with anxious care at the tea-table, and watched him wistfully all through the evening, as if he felt him doubly dear.

Perhaps he did, perhaps dim shadows in the future way warmed Anthony's affection for hapless Alexander to tenfold tenacity, showing him, in subtle prescience, what would be his post on that dreary path.

Captain Drummond did not leave his friend that night, but staid, with sweet fidelity, close by his side. And in the still hours, when the weak convalescent soundly slept and dreamed of happiness, the captain gazed with wakeful eyes through the latticed window, into the moon-lit sky, and he prayed for Alexander in his troubled soul, and weighed some possibilities with clenched hands.

\* \* \* \* \*

And so this last night of security passed, and a day, never to be forgotten, dawned on these friends.

They returned to Edinburgh by the early steamer, and drove out to Lady-Bank in time to soften the shock of Lady Tresilyan's revelations to the family there. It was about eleven o'clock when they alighted at the mansion door, and presented themselves to the astonished vision of Mrs. Ellathorne and her maidens.

They rushed into the hall; that thin face and excited eye presaged some wild disclosure.

"Welcome, dear Alexander!" cooed Florice, sweetly, pressing his hand with witching fondness. "Are you well or are you ill? Oh, welcome back, my brother!"



He caught her to his breast; her love unmanned him; her soft endearment wrung his soul; 'twas like a strain *she* used to sing; and where was she now, and who was she now?

Alexander related to the wonder-stricken family the interview in Roslin Wood.

"And so Glencora is not Glencora, after all, but Lady Tresilyan's sister!" cried Florice, sharply, at the conclusion of the strange discoveries. "No, that can never be! No! No!" cried she, pathetically. "She is mine, and such dark conspiracies never involved her life. What! Is this fairyland, where changelings are rife? Yet, if it be so that she is Lady Tresilyan's, and not mine, why should I lament her nobler birth? I will not. She is still the Glencora I loved."

And she melted into generous tears.

"All the certainty my lady's story gives us is that Glencora did not prove unfaithful," observed the captain, thoughtfully. "But never were our perplexities so thick. Whether she is a Calvert or a Strathmore, both houses have been outwitted; both have lost her. There is a power behind all which has stepped in, and snatched the twin, or Glencora, from Sir Tyndale and from Alexander Buccleugh, and that power is to be one life-long struggle to disclose."

"What do you mean?" broke from Florice's rigid lips.

"I believe there has been foul play," muttered the captain, hoarsely. "On whose part, I cannot even suspect in my own heart. Alexander, Lord Tresilyan, and I will join hand in hand to unmask that deadly power, if years are spent in the chase."

While he yet spoke, and the thrill of his meaning was quivering through all hearts, Lord Tresilyan's barouche and grays swept up the avenue, and my lady looked through the window at the picture within, and all her expected pleasure in the meeting was spoiled. Grief and embarrassment seized her sensitive soul. She sighed profoundly, as she descended, leaning on her husband's shoulder.

Captain Drummond and Alexander hurried out to meet the noble guests, and the necessary formalities being hastily gone through with, once more the hot-headed captain addressed my lady, but with what changed emotions!

His first emotions were those of open-hearted apology for his error, and lord and lady eagerly explained their part in



the error, and hastened to obtain the confidence of their upright host.

They made way for Lady Tresilyan to proceed to the parlor, and she hung back, and tried, by every innocent wile, to change her too expressive face to some expression unused by the Glencora she so fearfully resembled. Yet, when she stood on the threshold, the noble figure fully revealed, the perfect face cold and constrained, the troubled eyes fastened on the ground, she seemed so like the wraith of Glencora, standing there, fearful to enter again the circle she had deserted, that Florice and Jessie uttered low cries of astonishment, though they had been preparing themselves for her appearance, and, springing toward her, took each, impulsively, a hand, and drew her inside, in ungovernable agitation.

"Lady Tresilyan," exclaimed Mrs. Ellathorne, in a trembling voice, "this is a poor welcome to offer one who may be *her* kinswoman; but how can we, who mourn her loss, look on her breathing image without a fierce heart-pain? Bless you, my lady, you are surely another Glencora!"

"Mrs. Ellathorne," murmured she, quickly, "do not I suffer with you? Henceforth this sorrow shall be shared by us all, and lightened, I trust, by my efforts. I have been a gay soul all my life, with scarcely thought enough to recognize my own little crosses; but, believe me, I can feel with you, and I come with a fresh will to the search. And you, dear hearts!"—she turned, with infinite pathos, to the half-awed girls, and drew them to her side—"you must not greet me as only a false shade of your loved one, but give me your trust and affection; let me be as if I really were her sister, and not the stranger who comes with blacker shadows to hide Glencora's fate from you."

Thus my lady took her loving place among them as no social iceberg, but tender and faithful as the truest there.

Lord Tresilyan greeted each member of the little family with a glimmering of admiration in his fastidious eye, and he met Florice with a few appropriate words of pleasure and reassurance.

And then the strangely assorted group seated themselves in the home-like parlor, to commune of her who had passed through that wide casement just two months ago that day.

After some preliminary discussions, Lord Tresilyan made the first important suggestion.



"Having weighed patiently in my mind all possibilities," began he, "I propose that, as the straightest course toward finding the lady and foiling a conspiracy at one blow, we shall endeavor to prove the existence or non-existence of Lady Tresilyan's sister, simply by applying at the fountain-head for the information. There is one person alone whom we are certain knows the rights of this affair; that person is the old woman who tended the doomed Lady Strathmore, and the commands of Lady Tresilyan will induce Mrs. McIntyre to disclose the fatal secret. Therefore, suppose these ladies privately proceed to the Highlands, well-attended, of course, and quietly take possession of the aged prophetess in her lonely hut?"

Lady Tresilyan gave her lord a quick, brilliant smile. Florice turned in gentle gratitude toward him.

The gentleman weighed the proposal for a few moments; then Alexander remarked:

"That, as a primary step, would be most important; still, it seems like relinquishing the other supposition, and losing sight of one end of the trail. Remember," said he, feverishly, "time may be very precious on the other track."

"True," responded Lord Tresilyan, with ready sympathy; "we shall also set the detectives back upon their traces, and re-examine every atom of evidence which can be got at. Everything must be sifted. I assure you some flaw has been overlooked. Captain Drummond, I see you are recalling something of the kind. Keep it in mind, to be discussed hereafter."

In truth, the captain's bluff countenance was expressing the liveliest uneasiness, and his glance toward the faintly smiling Alexander was anything but cheerful.

Lord Tresilyan's quick intuition instantly read this mute interchange of significance, and unconsciously he paused; and Alexander, regardless of the captain's frown, immediately interposed:

"The flaw which was overlooked may possibly be contained in a story which in the previous search was divulged to the captain, and which he is generously wishing to suppress—as if there is any truth in it; or if it has any connection with Glencora, it casts a suspicion upon me which ruins me. Anthony, I must speak out; let me tell the story."

Lord Tresilyan bent toward the still faintly smiling Alex-



ander, who was only awaiting silence to disclose the particulars, and earnestly regarding him, said:

“Reserve all such painful disclosures to the end, sir, and when all else fails, *then* tell us that story, and throw yourself upon our justice. We will not fail to uphold you through the blackest appearances. For the sake of these ladies, Mr. Buccleugh, spare yourself.”

It was time to remember them, and Alexander, turning from his brave resolve, looked around at them with what assurance he could muster in his smile.

Mrs. Ellathorne was sitting with amazement and alarm in every line of her face, and Florice slipped around to the back of his chair, and clung to him with a pathetic gesture, as if her frail hands holding him there could defend him from all the world. But Jessie Buccleugh cried out with scorn:

“Oh, my lord, let him plead ‘not guilty’ at your bar at once, and dole out your justice to him at once. If his purity admits of a doubt, why not dispel or verify that doubt to-day? He was bereaved of his bride by fraud and his enemies; let us, his friends, in justice bereave him of his fair fame.”

With crimson face she came to her beloved cousin, and, kneeling, she touched his hand with her quivering lips, and washed it with her gushing tears.

My lord rose, with a flash from his mesmeric eyes, a gloom on his majestic brow, and, standing at the casement, watched the checkered green and gold shadows on the avenue.

But Alexander whispered, reproachfully:

“Jessie, you are doing cruel injustice to my truest friends, on whose hearts no stain of disloyalty rests, or suspicion lurks. Don’t fly out thus against my evil position. I wish to be no safer than in the hands of Lord Tresilyan and Captain Drummond.”

“Ah, I am always too hasty!” sobbed Jessie, “but it hurts me sorely to think of suspicion in connection with your name.”

Alexander raised her to her chair with grave command.

“Was not *Glencora* doubted?” said he, sternly.

She flushed crimson. Had she deplored the suspicion of *Glencora* as she now deplored the suspicion of Alexander?



Not so; but she was the first to doubt her. She remained stricken to silence as she reflected on these things.

This was, in effect, but the commencement of the consultation; after that it went on without interruption. It was at last agreed that Captain Drummond should, at that point, relate Mr. Hazeldean's story, as too much had been said on the subject to retreat comfortably; and this, with much reluctance, he did.

"Mr. Buccleugh," exclaimed Lord Tresilyan, at the conclusion of Captain Drummond's narrative, solemnly, "con-sign, as we do, Mr. Hazeldean's story to utter oblivion, till other hands than ours persistently drag it to the light. On that foul path no friend of yours will stir a step. Let us look for Glencora Strathmore—not for Moray Hazeldean's *incognito*."

He held out a brother's hand, and his clasp turned the drifting soul of the desolate Alexander in its despair, and it clung to these good friends, Lord Audley and Anthony Drummond. He looked around the agitated group, on each womanly face, beaming with faith in him, and briefly his wasted cheeks flushed high.

"Heaven reward such hearts!" breathed he. "My gratitude is too poor a return."

Captain Drummond wiped his hot face, and growled with an attempted business tone:

"Go, boy, bring Glencora's note here. It's a fine thing to have a legal text to go by, whatever befalls. Get the thing, that my lord may see the date that clears you to us, any way."

"Good!" said Lord Tresilyan, "and you shall lock it up, Captain Drummond; it may be valuable yet."

Alexander, thus urged, went his way to Denburn, to take from his desk the last note his bride had ever penned for him.

To pleasantly beguile the time, the captain asked my lord out with him to trace the exact route taken by the lovers that eventful evening, leaving the ladies to commune alone.

Mrs. Ellathorne left the room on some hospitable mission, and Lady Tresilyan, sitting thoughtfully by the casement and marking each lovely feature of the scene which had been the daily delight of the lady who had so strangely entwined herself with her interests, turned presently to Florice, and said softly:



"Come here, Miss Florice, and make friends with me. If I am so like her we love, should you not admit me into the outer covert of your heart's temple? My poor girlie, my pining baby Calvert," murmured my lady, while her witching eyes drew the timid Florice to lean on her bosom and weep silently. "Poor fading baby Calvert moans for lost heart's-ease, starves for vanished sister-love, and refuses all meaner consolation. Take Rosecleer, Glencora's double, for a temporary sister, my tiny one, and let her cheer thee."

With her mellow tones uttering quaint endearment, and her balmy breath sweeping across the upturned face of Florice, my lady could not be resisted; in fascinating peace Florice sank heavier in her dainty arms, and smiled in lorn love.

"And you, too, Miss Jessie," murmured my lady again, looking toward her remote figure, which lingered in sight and yet aloof, "come here and learn to love me. My dear, you must look into that passionate heart of yours, and be a brave little woman, and crush a fast-growing flower that you will see there. Little woman, do you know what that flower is?"

Jessie, leaning by my lady's chair, with her arms leaning on her lap, looked up with a fitful flush on her sweet face.

Lady Tresilyan bent her head close to her, and her lips formed inaudibly one word, "Love."

Jessie hid her face from the majestic countenance bending over her; it seemed as if an accusing angel in Glencora's likeness had smitten her with her unwitting disloyalty, and she shrank in mute distress from the revealed sin.

"And do you know what the flower's fruit will be?" questioned Lady Tresilyan again. Once more she bent down, and shaped the voiceless word, "Death!"

Jessie stared in affright.

"What do you foresee?" whispered she.

"The eyes of many reaching your secret, dear little woman, the judgment of many condemning your cousin to a felon's doom; take care, little woman, take care! Look into your heart."

Her finger upheld warningly, her face formed to express the noblest emotions, expressing now grave apprehension, my lady was, for the second time, resistless, Jessie succumbed with a low cry, and kneeling by lovely Lady Tresilyan, whose one arm upheld Florice, the other caressed



Jessie, took a long, upbraiding survey of her poor little heart, and found it sadly astray.

\* \* \* \* \*

At last the captain led his companion down to the canal side, and as they strolled along the narrow path, they thoughtfully spoke of the Hazeldean's story.

"The lawyer never heard from his brother again?" queried Lord Tresilyan.

"No, indeed, my lord. I used to see Hazeldean almost every day about it, but have not gone near him for three weeks, in fact, ever since Lady Tresilyan appeared in Edinburgh I had lost sight of that story. Hazeldean had lost heart himself when I last saw him, and began to suspect that his brother had traced and married the lady abroad, and was too happy to care a rush for the folks at home. It was this portion of the canal which we dragged that night."

They were standing by the canal, some ten paces to the left of the footpath which led through the corn to the kitchen green, and two laborers were reaping the captain's oats close beside them. Their glittering scythes rasped through the golden sea, laying it low at every stroke, in fresh swathes, and the beaded sweat stood thick on their brows.

Presently Lord Tresilyan touched the captain's shoulder.

"A gentleman is coming down through the corn. I think he is looking for you," said he.

And the captain, wheeling, stood face to face with Mr. Philip Hazeldean.

"News, Mr. Hazeldean?" cried the captain, grasping his hand heartily.

"Presently, captain. The ladies sent me down in search of you. I have something to tell you."

With a pale, stern face, the lawyer responded to the captain's introduction of Lord Tresilyan, and then they stood, a silent group, with waiting faces, on the bank, and gazed at the turbid waters and round at the sweet corn-field.

"This is the path which Alexander walked back alone after he had seen his last of her," muttered the captain, reflectively.

And while the word was on his tongue one of the reapers flung down his scythe, stooped over the fallen corn, pulled something from among the tangled gorse, and, wiping his



luminous brow with his shirt sleeve, stepped forward to the captain.

"Here's a thrifle I found in the corn, yer honor."

And my lord and the lawyer looking on, Captain Drummond took it in his fingers, opened the damp pages, and cried, in a startling voice:

"Good Heaven! It is Glencora's note-book!"

Then Mr. Philip Hazeldean's stern face flashed with acrid light; he laid a heavy hand on the captain's arm, and drew him one step aside.

"*And G. C. is dead!*" said Mr. Hazeldean.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### A WOOER FOR THE LADY OF STRATHMORE.

Lady Kilmeny was standing at the great center window of the banqueting hall, looking down, with a mocking lip and lurking deviltry in her eye at the Laird Tyndale and Major Gavin in the court below, as they shook their dusty bonnets, and stamped their spurred feet, preparatory to ascending into the presence of their kinswoman.

The lady was clothed in a long robe of emerald velvet, which swept the floor behind, like a train, and the cincture of quaintly carved iron clasped a waist almost startling in its slenderness, when taken in proportion to her regal height and undulating bust. Why she should choose *iron* for her jewelry, the inconsolable Mysie failed to ascertain; but there were the antique ornaments spanning her waist, weighing down her slender neck, and clanking like fetters upon her arms. My lady had taken an insane fancy to these ornaments. She had found them among the effects of Lady McGillvray Strathmore, one gloomy, rain-sodden day, when she was laughing and taunting over the ancient, clannish lore inscribed in worm-eaten books. She brought these to light from the recesses of an old oaken cabinet, rattling like manacles.

My lady held them up, her eyes gleaming, solemnly kissed the elaborately carved griffith with a chain in its mouth, which composed the design, and pronounced them an heir-loom expressly descended to her, and sneering and jibing, bade Mysie put them away for state occasions.

And this was state occasion the first.



Lord Tyndale had sent from Bracken Hough, two days ago, an intimation that he and his eldest son, the major, should honor themselves by waiting upon my lady on Thursday, the 26th of September, if it were my lady's pleasure.

My lady had returned word that it was her convenience; so here the gentlemen were, prepared to do business.

And my lady having, with whimsical care, ordered a grand feast, had caused the gaunt reception-rooms to be decked with velvet festoons and heather wreaths, as if royalty was expected; and all looked gay, imposing, and brilliant, except, indeed, the dull bands which decorated my lady's fair self.

Lady Kilmeny smiled curiously to herself when she saw them down in the locked court-yard of her Tower, but she smiled much more chillingly as they approached her, one by one, and kissed her extended hand.

"Welcome to Strathmore, Lord Tyndale; welcome Major Gavin. Be seated, and accept my hospitality," said my lady, with a sweeping reverence and a wave of her hand. "Eat, my uncle and cousin, eat, drink, make merry; then chalk my path for me."

The laird stood speechless, jaw dropped and gray eyes agog, staring at my lady, and forgetting to accept the proffered seat at the foot of the glittering banquet table.

Big, burly Major Gavin gaped too, but was not too astounded to blurt out what was atop in his dull brain.

"Gramercy, Cousin Kilmeny, you're not yourself at all. What in thunder makes you so lean and old-looking? You're twenty years older since I saw you three weeks ago!"

"The cares, good Gavin, the cares of State tell upon my unaccustomed brain," quoth the lady, blandly, throwing a covert glance of keen amusement at the laird; "and I dare say I shall gain other twenty years of appearance ere another three weeks pass over my grisling head. I am failing in looks very fast, Cousin Gavin. I shall soon be really very ugly."

"Jove! but will you?" ejaculated the dragoon, twisting his pointed mustaches in consternation. "Gad! you're white as a ghost now—you're like a witch-woman, Cousin Kilmeny!"

My lady gravely bowed to the floor, as if at the receipt of



a fine compliment, leaving the broad shouldered dragoon glowering in amazement.

"My lady mocks you, Gavin," exclaimed the laird, flushing angrily, as he watched his erratic niece. "You're slow and stupid, Gavin, or you'd paint a willful May with brighter colors than depreciation. She laughs in her sleeve at your simplicity."

Still the major twisted his nut-brown mustaches, and gnawed their fine Polish barbs in his wonderment, for his cousin was standing before them with smiling face and dark, scintillating eye, threading the long, raven-black strands of her hair, which she wore totally unconfined to-day, with her cold, slender fingers, and the action suggested strangely to him the oscillation of a tigress before she springs on the prey.

"Cousin Major," said my lady, with silver tone, "I'm sorry I can't suit your admiring eye better, but my heyday of beauty is gone forever, and there's nothing left of me but old age and a furious temper. I often feel now as if I must strangle some one, and Mysie thinks I am insane. But don't feel uncomfortable, I pray you, good major; I'm quite sane to-day, and in a very good humor, and looking my very best."

And with a last covert flash at the uneasy laird, my lady led the way to the table, seated herself, and signed for the major to place himself at her right hand. This he did with considerable hesitation, involuntarily moving his chair away an inch or two from her, thereby wreathing my lady's lips into new curves of *diablerie*.

"My lady, my Lady Kilmeny!" exclaimed Laird Tyndale, gliding into the carved chair at the foot of the board, and bending forward to gaze keenly at his smiling *vis-a-vis*, "why wear you the chains of dead Lady Gillvray Strathmore? Take you her place when you wear the bonds? She was a good lady, and true to her husband's house; will you be the same?"

"Laird Tyndale, you have clasped my hand in pledge of that."

"Then why so fierce an eye, Lady Kilmeny? why so scorning a tongue for the heir of Bracken Hough? Those amulets should change your bitter heart to softness and loyalty, for so was the heart of their former wearer."

Lady Kilmeny, coiling the sealed band round her slender



throat, returned her uncle's gaze with eyes softened by sudden interest.

"Tell me about Lady Strathmore," she cried. "No one speaks of her here, and she was my aunt. Tell me all you can remember, Laird Tyndale."

"I can't tell you much, child, for it was but a short time she blossomed in sterile Strathmore, the bonniest flower of Sutherland! But why, Lady Kilmeny, do you think of her?" asked the old man, carving the haunch of venison with slightly unsteady hand.

"I know not," murmured my lady, leaning her brow upon her shadow hand. "But I think, and I think, and I weave wild dreams, and there's ever a pallid Lady Strathmore looking at me through them all. Laird Tyndale, did I ever see Lady McGillvray?"

"I wot not. She was never in Aberdeen," replied the laird.

"You trifle, sir," exclaimed my lady, with a frown. "Why don't you speak decidedly, and without finessing? Is it that simple Gavin sits at my right hand? Eat, good major, and shut your ears when you open your mouth. Now, Laird Tyndale, I will listen to the biography of my dead aunt."

"Kilmeny, there is nothing to be told but what you already know," said the laird, looking at her sternly.

"Nay, then, but that can be contradicted," cried my lady, with a short laugh. "I have yet to be told why you lock Lady McGillvray's portrait, with that of my cousin Rosecleer, in the tower chamber. Sir, if you have made me lady here, why do you not intrust me with Strathmore's histories? I will know her life, and be it good, or be it bad, I'll walk in her steps," murmured she, suddenly, weeping.

"She was the purest, bravest lady that ever grew on Strathmore tree," said the laird, solemnly. "She never traversed Strathmore's fortunes but once, and—and that fault she washed out with her death."

"What!" breathed my lady, thrilling with suspense. "*Murdered*, was she?"

"Killed by no mortal hand; it was the Doom!" muttered Tyndale Strathmore.

Lady Kilmeny was silenced after that, and the feast proceeded in utter silence. Perhaps the dread superstitions of



this house were at last taking root in her proud heart. She sat, pale and quiet, thinking, her down dropped eyes fastened upon the bracelet on her right wrist, and Major Gavin, seeing her face turned toward him, ceased his frequent stares at her, and applied himself assiduously to the viands.

"What was my aunt's maiden name?" asked Lady Kilmeny, looking up from her reveries.

"Ye'se get nae mair frae me the noo," muttered he, sourly. "Gang to the auld Nurse McIntyre, who bedded my lady when a bride, an' streaked my lady when a cauld corpse. Gang to the crone yersel, if ye want to know her good and evil portion, an' tak warning by what ye hear."

And with that he strode from the table, and stood in one of the groined stone windows overlooking the Firth.

My lady looked after him with a face of unearthly intellect, and a wild smile on her parted lips; then rose, graciously led the way to another elegantly arranged chamber, seated her guests, and placed herself directly opposite them.

"Speak, my uncle," said she, assuming an attitude of attention. "I await the opening of your mind."

"Lady Kilmeny, I have but a few words to say, but I beg you will hear them with attention," began the laird, impressively. "When I have said those words I shall leave my son Gavin to introduce his business with you."

Lady Kilmeny sat back on her lounge with a compressed lip, and bowed her head.

"When you left your home in Aberdeen, and accompanied me to your possessions here, you left some friends behind you," resumed the laird, taking her hand and clasp- ing it firmly; "one of whom was on such terms with you that it was with difficulty you broke the connection on such short notice; the others most generously let you go, without protest."

"Is there any necessity for the recapitulation of an old tale?" demanded my lady, contemptuously snatching away her hand. "You know I dislike such a system, Laird Tyn- dale. Speak to the point."

"My lady, I will be heard," responded the laird, repos- sessing himself of her hand, and tightening his grasp as he proceeded. "I shall speak of the fact yet this once, and then it dies between us. It is but due to us, to Gavin"— this with a meaning pressure of her cold fingers—"that an



outline of your late life should be gone over. Now, listen——”

“But I positively refuse to listen, Laird Tyndale!”

“Lady Kilmeny, if you remember your vow, made on Wolf’s Head three weeks ago, you will listen.”

And my lady ceased her angry strife and sat down conquered.

“Lady Kilmeny, you were poor and obscure in Aberdeen, and though your grandparents fondly cherished you, they could promise you but a meager home after their death. Well, knowing this, they made no opposition when your house, to which you became necessary, claimed you for its head, to avert the judgments brought upon it by a traitress; so, when you came with me, you came with their blessing. Is it so, my lady?”

There was a pause. Sir Tyndale stubbornly waited for some sign of affirmation, and, griping the girl’s chilly hand, strove to catch her gloomy eye.

“Your vow!” he muttered in her ear at last, and, with a shiver, my lady looked at him, and faintly articulated:

“It is so.”

“Mr. Gavin, listen,” quoth the laird, with a glance at that rather stolid-looking personage. “I wish to be perfectly satisfied with my lady’s former course, so note what she tells you. You were glad to leave obscurity and cramping poverty, my lady, for the good of your wealthy house, so you joyfully obeyed the summons; and inspired by a noble self abnegation, severed a tie which many a girl would have trembled to do. I shall only touch upon this subject, and spare you as much as I may. You were contracted in marriage to a young gentleman in mediocre circumstances, a printer, or sub-editor of some local paper in Aberdeen, and he——”

My lady rose with a burning brow, and wrenched her hand from the laird.

“What has this outrage to do with your plans?” she demanded with suppressed fury. “How dare you, Tyndale Strathmore? Enough of your oration—I’ll hear no more!”

Sir Tyndale, being stronger than she, forced her back to her chair, fondled, clasped, and kissed her shuddering fingers, deprecated and commanded by many a covert art, then gingerly tripped on his way again.

“My dear child, I am almost finished,” he blandly re-



marked. "To proceed: You dismissed your lover of your own free will, discarded him forever, and bade a stormy adieu to his sister, who was your closest friend. You accompanied me as far as Forres in brilliant spirits, devoted and dauntless, and when there we unfortunately learned that your betrothed was driven to insanity, an event which might have been expected on losing a woman like yourself. But, instead of receiving the intelligence with gentle regret, and throwing yourself at once into the arms of your house, you have flouted and scorned and revenged your mad lover's cause on us all these weeks, and stretched back weak hands to Aberdeen. You have written to the sister, and pined for a visit from your lover's brother, that you might obtain their forgiveness, and take you back among them, and that you might even win back the reason of your ruined betrothed. And how have they responded to your cries? Read again that bitter letter you have graven on your rankling heart—remember each scathing sentence of wrath and reproach—ride to Wolfe's Head and repeat again your vow—then turn to Strathmore once more, its deliverer, and not its bane. My niece, my dear, *dear* niece, I have done. My son, nothing lies between you and her. And now, with my blessing, I leave you."

At the close of this singular speech, the laird released my lady's hands, rose, looked down for an instant with portentous significance into her face, then hurried from the apartment to clatter, on a tall, roan steed, straight home to Bracken Hough.

The thoughts of Kilmeny might have been a curious study to her lover just then. She was not thinking of leaning on his arm to walk down the allotted way; more likely she was wondering whether her frail hand could lay him low at its entrance.

Major Gavin cleared his throat when six minutes had elapsed, and charged at the enemy in true dragon style:

"Gad, Kilmeny, my girl! the fact is, my father thinks it best that you should take my name at once, and so, faith, do I. It's best for the house, and we'll not make such a bad couple when the law has linked us, eh, Cousin Kilmeny? And if you'll just keep your rugged temper for your hinds, and dogs, and horses—gad! you'll have enough of them, an' ye like—why, I'll be as kind a husband as



ever kissed Strathmore May. What do you say, Lady Kilmeny?"

Dark, ominous shadows were lying thick on my lady's bleached face; her lips wreathed in a wicked smile, and her sharp, glistening teeth were set with rage and scorn.

"Tell your father," said she, in a quavering tone, "that I cannot marry where I cannot stoop to obey. I could never suffer you, Major Gavin, were you my husband; and without in the least infringing on my duty to the house of Strathmore, I utterly and absolutely refuse to consort with Lord Tyndale's eldest son."

"But, Cousin Kilmeny," urged the poor stupid major, with a purple face, growing proportionately desperate as the victory seemed almost declared, "you know you must marry one of us, and it should be me. And you vowed, you know, and so on——"

"To marry *you*?" interposed my lady, with a ringing laugh.

"To do for the good of Strathmore," continued Major Gavin, "and in spite of previous attachment to connect yourself with its fortunes, which cannot be done, you very well know, unless a union like this takes place. Take time to consider, Lady Kilmeny—take two days."

"Not an hour!" cried my lady, vehemently. "Go tell Laird Tyndale that I cannot, will not do the thing I hate, while it lies outside my vow. You have heard my last word on the subject, Major Gavin; and now, if you are a man, leave me!"

So the dragoon gathered himself up, defeated, from the fray, and as he was a man, albeit a slow and incomprehensive one, he left my lady's chamber with a low reverence, and followed hard on his sire's traces, with many a puzzled, backward glance at the frowning battlements of Strathmore Tower slowly sinking into the vale behind.

Perhaps there were astonishment and rage rampant in Bracken Hough about an hour after this eventful interview; perhaps rage predominated, for astonishment could hardly flourish in the wary Tyndale's heart after such experiences as he had had of his niece's temper. He said very little, but probably thought the more, during Major Gavin's indignant declamation, and turned at the conclusion of the recital to the eager Kenneth and the silent Robin.

He nodded to his second son.



“You shall try my lady’s will to-morrow,” quoth the laird.

And Kenneth, spite of a lowering glance from Robin, bowed and answered:

“Ay, father, that I will.”

\* \* \* \* \*

The Lady of Strathmore was strangely still and quiescent after her brave wooer’s exodus; so quiet and immovable that the amber shadows of the western sun deepened high on the gleaming wall of her dainty chamber before she once raised her face from its long motionless repose.

The court-bell clanged in the summer night, and the hesitating flutter of her handmaiden’s fingers upon her chamber door at last aroused my lady to life and its thorns.

“There will be a storm to-night,” quoth my lady, drearily, “and little cares the Lady of Strathmore for storm or peace. Come in, Mysie.”

“Shall I bring my lady’s supper?” whispered Mysie, with a timid courtesy, as she entered the apartment.

“Fetch my bonnet and plaid,” said Lady Kilmeny, not heeding her maid’s question.

“What, at half-past eight o’clock?” uttered the startled girl. “The gate’s locked, and oh, my lady, but the night’s threatening.”

“Go!” commanded her mercurial lady, with rising passion. “Do you contradict me, girl?”

“Ohone, my sweet lady,” wailed the lady’s-maid, beginning immediately to weep, “they’ll no open the gate for you sae late—bide till the morn.”

My lady’s answer was to swoop toward a light silken plaid which was thrown over an ormulu thermometer, cast it over her head, and advance to the door, at which poor Mysie Craig fled precipitately through the gaunt banqueting hall up to my lady’s wardrobe, from whence she swiftly returned with the wrappings in her arms, and her own plaid thrown round her head, ready to be her mistress’ follower.

She had to run for it, though; the lady was already in the court, talking in clear, absolute tones to the gate-keeper.

“I command obedience!” she was saying, as Mysie devotedly placed herself at her side. “Open the gate for me!”



"The laird was here the day, ma leddy," hesitated the man, "an' he left nae sie order."

Lady Kilmeny drew herself to her regal height, and looked at him once with her electric eyes ablaze.

"I am your mistress, Ronald, and in my own right I demand the key of my castle."

And in virtue of discretion being the better part of valor before those dangerous eyes, the man unlocked the massive door and gave my lady access to the murky night upon the moor.

"Lock the gate, Ronald, and keep watch," said my lady. "What, Mysie; you here? Go back child; there will be a storm."

"Mistress," said Mysie, in a low, earnest voice, "as lang as Mysie Craig has heart to beat and body to gang, she'll stick by her lady in spite o' wind an' weather. You're not able to wrastle wi' the storm alane, my lady; tak me to lean upon."

My lady turned at that, and without a word walked across the gusty space, while Mysie, trembling at her own temerity, kept at her side, shuddering as the long savage sweep of the wind whistled through the distant firs, or drove sheets of powdered spray high from the sea over the path.

They seemed to be on their way to Golspie. For perhaps a mile my lady paced swiftly on, her maid at her side, along the high road skirting the sea, and Mysie was just comforting herself with counting the distant lights in the town, when my lady turned sharp into a lonely, inland path, and stopped.

"Come here, girl," she said, drawing her companion closer to scan her features in the indistinct gloom; "do you follow Kilmeny Strathmore for love or for curiosity?"

The girl answered by a tempest of tears.

"Oh, sweet heart! Oh, my bonnie lady, dinna doubt me!" she sobbed, vehemently,

"False or true to your lady, Mysie, which?" questioned Lady Kilmeny, still gazing on her agitated face with wistfulness.

"*True!* lady, true as heaven—true as death!" cried Mysie, lifting her clasped hands upward.

Lady Kilmeny bent over her, and unaccustomed tenderness stirred in her frozen heart.



She clasped the trembling girl and a kiss fell like a blessing upon her brow.

"Then, Mysie, thy crazy mistress trusts thee as she trusts no kinsman in false Strathmore!" she murmured, softly. "Come with thy lady, child, and hear the history of her life to-night."

"Where?" whispered Mysie, thrilling with joy and awe.

"To nurse McIntyre's, who knows every branch and twig on Strathmore tree. She shall prophesy my fate in the doom of McGillvray's bride, the fairest flower of Sutherland."

"Nurse McIntyre, the *witch*?" aspirated the maid in momentary terror. Then she girded up brave heart—supported my lady's slender frame, and tramped down the dark, desolate lane, with sturdy determination.

And presently they stood before a lonely hut, embosomed in funereal yews and shock willows, surrounded by damp morass and water rushes—the house of the Seer of Strathmore.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE DEAD WITNESS.

"*And 'G.C.' is dead!*"

Captain Drummond felt a sudden weight descend on his heart that threatened to crush it; a strange fluttering filled the ocean of blackened space that seemed to grow before his eyes; he clutched the lawyer's arm in momentary faintness.

My lord stood petrified, gazing in the lawyer's cold, downcast face, and the Irish laborer, striding back to his bite in the golden sea, looked over his shoulder at the ominous trio, and crossed himself in devout invocation.

"Mother Howly, forfend us from all lost pocket-books!" muttered he, picking up his scythe again and sweeping down the crisp waves.

And Mr. Philip Hazeldean took up his moral scythe, and swept down the sea of doubts which his first stroke had stirred to its angry bottom.

"There need be no mystery on the subject," said Mr. Hazeldean. "I have found my brother's friend, and she is dead."

The captain interposed:



"She is not Glencora Calvert, you know: I do not believe she is."

"That may be proved easily," responded the lawyer, in measured accents. "However, I have seen her."

"Has your brother written to you?" quickly asked my lord.

"No, he has not," said Mr. Hazeldean, looking at him in surprise. "Has Captain Drummond informed you of this said affair?"

"Fully, sir, and also Mr. Buccleugh; there is no secrecy observed upon the subject among those whom it concerns. If your brother has not written you, how are you assured that this dead lady is his friend?"

Mr. Hazeldean's somber face grew white; he turned away with an involuntary shudder.

"Pray relieve our anxiety, Hazeldean," prayed the captain. "Relate the circumstance from end to end."

Captain Drummond was nursing that consoling doubt in his bosom, till he might look his own shocked surprise in the face. He trembled to foresee where circumstances might drift them. If Mr. Hazeldean really believed the identity of the two ladies, what then?

They were walking up through the corn; they crossed the kitchen green; they passed round the left angle of the mansion, and entered the library through a favorite door in the secluded passage before described.

There, in convinced tones, Philip Hazeldean, made the disclosures he had come to make.

"Three weeks ago, when Mr. Buccleugh fell sick at Lady-Bank, a detective officer, of the name of Wynde, paid me a visit; directed to me, he explained, by his superintendent, Mr. Spires, who was engaged in your interest, in the search of Glencora Calvert. Mr. Wynde told me that he had been watching a certain object of suspicion before overlooked; had run him into temporary security, and waited my assistance to dispose of him. The gist of his arguments I shall not trouble you with; sufficient to say that I was induced by my own strong convictions, and in the cause of justice, to relate Moray's story to Mr. Wynde exactly as I first related it to you. With which additional data Mr. Wynde followed up the clew he held in his hands, and made out a case of most startling moment. I have hitherto shrunk from wounding you with a knowledge of that case, captain, and



declined taking it up myself till this morning, when the motive power was suddenly given me. Mr. Wynde came to me to announce that a dead body had been washed ashore at Leith. At his suggestion I went to see it, he wisely refraining from directing my suspicions in any way, and as we stood over it I saw these things:

“A tall, slender woman, long, black hair, very thick and beautiful, small hands and feet, attired in a black silk dress, without pin or brooch of any kind, and only ornamented by a ruche of white lace; one hand clenched like a vise, and the mode of her death apparent to all. A white pocket-handkerchief, trimmed deeply with real lace of the new Mechlin pattern, folded transversely and twisted, was passed in a fatal noose around her throat and tied so tight that suffocation must have been inevitable, the knot, mark you, at the back of her head. She had been murdered and then carried to the sea.”

Sick with the remembrance, Mr. Hazeldean wiped his pale face and hastily swallowed a glass of water.

Lord Tresilyan, intently listening, put a question.

“Her appearance, Mr. Hazeldean—her face—describe it.”

But Mr. Hazeldean averted a horrified countenance and shuddered.

“My lord, I cannot. Remember, she has been two months deceased. Remember the delicacy of those beauteous features, and judge how well you would describe their awful ruin. Ah, she little resembles the magnificent woman whom my brother once sketched for me. But on that cambric handkerchief are embroidered the initials, ‘G. C.’ and her clenched fingers being forced open we found this.”

Mr. Hazeldean took carefully from his pocket-book a damp shred of white paper, of what texture it was impossible to determine, so rumpled had it been in the corpse’s clasp and so stained by the brine.

Its form was this: as if a letter, having been folded twice, one of the squares being blank, had been hurriedly torn off and made use of to write some words upon. These words were not easily deciphered, but when at last the captain contrived to do so, unassisted by Mr. Hazeldean, who refused all aid, he stared blankly in the lawyer’s face.

For the shred said, in a woman’s agitated scrawl:



"Moray Hazeldean: A—— has discovered our love. My inconstancy seals my fate. Before you come to me, oh! tardy one, I will be no more. Farewell. G. C."

Captain Drummond dashed the fatal paper from his hand, and it fell, damp and clinging, at my lord's feet.

"What does that mean?" demanded the stern voice of the lawyer.

"It means that I trample on the suspicion conveyed by that woman's last letter; and that I swear that A—— does not stand for Alexander!" cried Captain Drummond.

"It means that A—— has a credulous friend; that 'G. C.' has no avenger in her once fond guardian. Fie, man! will you not open your eyes and see?" returned Mr. Hazeldean, warmly, moved to passing anger in spite of his even temper. "But, Captain Drummond, go and see for yourself—go with Mrs. Ellathorne, your sister, and claim your dead. Surely you will not disown her if your sister recognizes her?"

"That I won't, Hazeldean; I'm no rogue," growled the captain. "If Hester says it's Glencora, then I must believe so, too; but Hester won't. No, no, it's a fearful mistake."

Mr. Hazeldean lifted the scrap of paper from the carpet.

"My lord, read and judge if it is not Glencora who speaks," said he, earnestly.

And his lordship, mastering its brief contents at a glance, turned it over, examined its fiber attentively, and then picked up Glencora's note-book, which lay unheeded on the table.

He turned over the sodden leaves one by one, till he came to the penciled memoranda which Mrs. Ellathorne had been dictating to the Bride-Elect the afternoon before the wedding, when she stood at the parlor window watching for Alexander, with a smile on her lips.

"July 25th, leave home; 26th, Liverpool; 28th, Dover; 30th, Paris; Aug.——" and a long dash finished off the notes.

Lord Tresilyan brought this page to the light, and placed the other fugitive scrap beside it.

"Mr. Hazeldean," said my lord with knitted brow, "do you believe the same hand traced both these writings?"

Mr. Hazeldean stooped to scrutinize them. Captain Drummond came near, and eagerly waited.



The penciled memoranda in Glencora's note-book was jotted down in that cramped, careless, upright style one usually falls into with a short pencil, and the note-book held in one's hand, slanting rather to the left than to the right—readable, yet scarcely recognizable.

The penciled characters of "G. C.'s" note were dashed off in a different style—bending, wavering letters, and long hair strokes connecting each word with its follower, as if the writer had dashed them all off as one breathless exclamation; while the initials at the end, usually characteristic of the hand that traced them, were spread over at least an inch of space, without stereotyped curve, or mechanical elaboration of any kind.

"I see an incontestable proof," uttered Mr. Hazeldean, with quickened breath; "not in the writing—there is nothing convincing in that—but in the paper. See! the shred that we find in the dead woman's hand, after two months' immersion in the sea, fits the private note-book of Glencora Calvert to a nicety. It appears to have been written there, and torn out afterward."

My lord uneasily fitted the paper. It was as the lawyer said.

My lord held the edge of the shred between his careful eye and the light, and a gleam of triumph irradiated its doubtful depths.

"The leaves of the note-book were gilt, though tarnished; that is still apparent. Yet this shred of paper, fitting so accurately, has not been gilt-edged, so far as I can detect."

"The gilt would vanish in a long submersion in salt water," returned Mr. Hazeldean.

"The note-book has been soaking in two months' nightly dews and occasional showers," retorted my lord.

"But not in the ocean brine!" exclaimed the lawyer.

Silenced, Lord Tresilyan turned over the remainder of the leaves, looking for the vacancy from which the stray leaf might have been torn.

He came to a vacancy at last, where a leaf had been wrenched with evident haste from the book—in such haste, indeed, as to leave a minute angular portion still adhering to the binding; other vacancy there was none.

My lord silently laid the damp shred in the vacant space, and it disproved the lawyer's hypothesis; the jagged corner



of the vanished leaf overlapped the perfect edge of the other.

"More leaves might easily have been pulled from the book, which it would be impossible for us to discover if they were taken out entire, as this leaf has been," answered the lawyer.

"True," responded my lord, keenly. "Many things might have been; but *might* proves nothing. This note-book has been a new one when dropped from Glencora's hand, in some little walk through the fields; therefore every page taken from it would leave a decided gap. We see no gap but one, and your leaf does not fit it."

Mr. Hazeldean drew breath sharply.

"My lord," entreated he, "will you not admit what has been too evident to me ever since I witnessed the reaper pull yon note-book from the ripe corn? Must I stab my poor friend, then, to the heart, by urging with my prejudiced lips what your unbiased judgment should urge?"

"I confess I fail to apprehend," said my lord, with anxiety.

"Captain Drummond," breathed Mr. Hazeldean, with slow significance, "you told me, in our first interview, that, the evening of her disappearance, Glencora Calvert stood at your parlor window, holding this new pocket-book in her hand; that, when she passed through the window with her betrothed, she had slipped it into her pocket; that, when she was found, it would probably be still in her possession, and would guide recognition. Yet it was not so, because some other crafty hand had removed it, and all other means of identification, from the lifeless remains of 'G. C.,' after suffocating her. Alexander Buccleugh was the last person seen to walk with Glencora. She had the pocket-book in her possession when she left the house. He came back by the canal alone, after having parted with her, and we find her pocket-book in the corn by the canal."

The captain's ashy lips were glued together, his clasped hands were stretched in anguish toward Mr. Hazeldean, as they had once before been stretched in anguish, when this awful chain of evidence was begun.

Lord Tresilyan, pushed from refuge to refuge, answered, with a flashing eye:

"This is an ungenerous manner in which to sustain your position, Mr. Hazeldean. If you wish to prove that Glen-



cora is dead, why should you try to prove that Alexander murdered her? Do you not see that he could have no motive, while other secret foes might have a motive, yet to be disclosed?"

Mr. Hazeldean could not reply. He was bending in sorrow over the frenzied captain, whose agitation was fearful; his chivalrous heart was aching at the gulf of treachery he must unvail to these true friends of the suspected man.

"One thing we have forgotten," exclaimed Lord Tresilian, quickly. "Your brother Moray received a letter from his friend on Tuesday morning, the 25th of July? And Captain Drummond has proved that Glencora wrote a letter that morning—witnessed by her sister Florice. If that letter was produced, with its date, would you be satisfied whether it was the same note which your brother thrust into your hand to read, and which was signed 'G. C.'?"

"The date would satisfy me," said Mr. Hazeldean, eagerly. "Can you produce such a letter?"

"Alexander received a letter from Glencora that morning, making up some little difference, the only letter she wrote that day. He has gone to his residence to find it. If, on his return, that letter answers in every particular to the letter you received from the hand of Moray Hazeldean, with the long name at the close, then it was written by 'G. C.', who lies murdered at Leith; but if not, and Alexander can show the proper date, and prove Glencora's hand, then we shall know that Glencora never wrote to Moray Hazeldean, and that consequently she is yet to be found. Are you agreed?"

Mr. Hazeldean bowed; and they waited till the green baize door clanged after some one, and Alexander came in, flushed with hasty walking, a trifle worried in expression.

"Mr. Hazeldean, Mr. Buccleugh," said my lord, briefly.

They looked earnestly each at the other, the lawyer with lowering brow and distrustful vigilance, Alexander with aroused *hauteur* and instant constraint.

"Give me the letter, Alexander," uttered the white lips of the captain, and he held out a tremulous hand. His manner, his impatience, his unusual addressing of him by the most familiar name, had their effect on Alexander. In a moment he knew the meaning of the lawyer's visit. He saw that his day had come.

"I see Mr. Hazeldean has been making some communi-



cation of a painful nature," said Alexander, "and when you and my lord have examined this letter, I shall expect to be made aware of its purport."

As he tendered the promised document, his hand was seized by the captain's, and retained in a spasmodic clasp.

The grasp tightened as the captain glanced from top to bottom of the dainty sheet of loving words with a pretty Glencora signature, and he lifted a glance of despair to Alexander.

"No," said Alexander, gently, "there was no date whatever. I had not noticed the omission when I mentioned the existence of the letter."

Mr. Hazeldean's face flushed scarlet, his nervous fingers ran through his thick, moist locks, he averted his dark face from Alexander.

My lord exclaimed immediately:

"Where is the envelope, Mr. Buccleugh? It will give the date quite as well, if the letter was posted."

"It was posted," replied Alexander, gloomily. "I received it in the bank, and in passing terror of some ill fortune to her, I tore the envelope hastily off, leaving it in two on my desk."

"Unfortunate!" ejaculated Lord Tresilyan, in tones of vivid regret.

"Captain Drummond"—turning quickly to him—"go and inform Mrs. Ellathorne of Mr. Hazeldean's tidings, and prepare her to accompany us at once to the scene. It is time we saw for ourselves."

Captain Drummond was hastening from the room, when the lawyer looked fixedly at him; he turned his head, and met the gaze.

"Beware what you say to her!" said Mr. Hazeldean, dryly.

The captain stared, and then frowned.

"Don't fear me," said he, with anger; "I'll tell her naught to bias her on either side, naught but the bare fact that she must know ere she looks on the woman down at Leith."

With which he went out, and strode to the parlor.

Lord Tresilyan gently addressed Alexander:

"Mr. Buccleugh, the purport of Mr. Hazeldean's visit is very unexpected and distressing. My dear fellow, endeavor



to hear it with fortitude, in case the person can be identified as one lost."

The thin face flushed, the delicate lips strove to compress themselves, but quivered with alarm. Alexander made an impatient gesture.

"Anything about *her*?" breathed he.

And my lord, with sad inflection, told him.

Poor, hapless Alexander! Soften the blow as Lord Tresilyan might, veil with blessed uncertainty the terrible drift of such a fact, the deadly meaning pursued him, surged over him, took away his breath.

"Heaven!" faltered Alexander, "is it thus I must find my love at last? Murdered, her name tarnished, her exquisite features unrecognizable! Oh, Glencora—oh, Glencora!"

Lord Tresilyan laid a pitying hand on his shoulder, and looked his sympathy. Alexander was quivering from head to foot, his nostrils dilated, his eyes dark with horror. Was it fear that so unnerved him?

"Sir, she was false to you if she loved my brother," said the lawyer, impelled by busy mistrust.

And for a moment Alexander laughed scornfully.

"That remembrance calms me," said he, firmly. "I can never doubt Glencora's fidelity to me. No, I do not believe you have found her. Heaven forbid!"

"We shall prove that," returned the lawyer, coldly.

They remained in silence till the door reopened, and the captain stood on the threshold.

"Come," said he, "my sister waits. I have told only her; the young ladies may be spared until we are sure."

The four gentlemen repaired to the hall. There stood Mrs. Ellathorne, attired for driving, her black robes quivering where she held them up in her shaking hands, a thick black veil concealing her agonized features.

Lord Tresilyan handed her to his own barouche, and, accompanied by Alexander, took his place beside her, while Captain Drummond followed the lawyer to his cab. In this order they drove to Leith, and in something less than an hour drew up before a neat, square building on Leith Sands, where many a corpse had been borne from the adjacent ocean to await its friends' recognition, and be buried with its own, or be hastily interred by government if no friends appeared.



They alighted, and my lord giving the support of his arm to Mrs. Ellathorne, they entered the long, desolate chamber, untenanted save by yon shrouded form on the distant bier, and two policemen guarding the door.

The group of new-comers advanced to the side of the dead. My lord lifted back the pall. The police officers drew near.

Captain Drummond bent over her first. He swayed back, and caught at Alexander. Alexander, bent over, biting an ashy lip, lifted one pallid hand and laid it back on the silken-shrouded breast, looked, with set face, at the cambric handkerchief, all dark and green with sea-slime, still knotted round the throat in deadly noose; and then Mrs. Ellathorne was borne forward on the arm of Lord Tresilyan.

She looked at the kerchief, at the corner of it which hung loose behind the poor head, and seeing the delicately braided initials, and the pattern of the lace, she wrung her hands in sudden frenzy, and cried piercingly, in incautious anguish:

"It is Glencora's handkerchief! and it is Glencora's corpse! Oh, welladay! my brain! my brain!"

My lord swooped on the captain.

"Is it?" asked he, in a hissing whisper.

Captain Drummond, pale as any girl, nodded his head.

My lord seized Alexander.

"For Heaven's sake, Alexander, what do you think? Is this she?"

And Alexander looked at the long, blue-black tresses, at the lovely wrist and hand, the face, mercifully shrouded; one frantic glance underneath the white linen was enough, and he clasped his hands, and raised hopeless eyes to heaven.

"On my soul, I cannot say, my lord!" said he, all too truthfully.

Then Mr. Philip Hazeldean walked to a dingy window, and covering his eyes with his hand, stood with his back to them.

Mrs. Ellathorne uttered a cry of despair, and the two officers of justice advanced to Alexander.

"You are my prisoner, sir. Here is the warrant!" said one.

Lord Tresilyan started, and made a frantic spring for-



ward, but recovered himself in time to restrain the captain, whose blue eyes were blazing wrathfully.

“On what charge, or on whose suit?” demanded my lord, in a choked voice.

“Charge of murder, suit of Spires & Wynde, on behalf of the crown.”

And they led him away, their unresisting captive.

And thus these lovers met again, and parted, for the last time on earth.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE GUIDANCE.

The crash had come at last.

So swiftly, so noiselessly, had the danger crept up, circling and narrowing round its victim, that when at last he fell, scarcely could his frantic friends discern the hand which had brought him down. He was borne from their midst, unresisting and unquestioning, to his dreary cell, where he dreamed of his lost one, from the first sweet advent of her coming to glorify his life, unto the bitter end, when that dread specter in the shrouded face mocked Glencora's form and claimed him as her destroyer.

As time went on his hesitation deepened into unbelief, and his inborn faith in his girl's purity and constancy cried out against this pale shade; he would not—could not regard *her*, with the evidences of her treachery to him in her hand—as his loyal Glencora.

“No, no, *no!*” he cried to his friend, Anthony Drummond, who shudderingly described her dress; the lace-trimmed handkerchief, which, when brought home, even Florice had recognized instantaneously—the long blue-black hair, so rare and splendid; and the possibility that some “other power,” as Lord Tresilyan had said, had removed the twin of Strathmore. “No, no,” cried the unwavering lover, lifting a flushing, convinced face from his hands, “there was no guile in Glencora, and that woman was not she. You'll not find treachery in her hands when we meet her face to face—should it be at God's triumph!”

So much of the clothing of “G. C.” as could be removed had been sent home, under the special guardianship of Mr.



Wynde, however, but who could say with certainty that these were the discolored relics of the clothing once worn by Glencora. Florice strove in vain, with fainting heart and sickened eyes, to pass impartial judgment, but could only surmise. Had Jean Malcolm been there the question could have been set at rest, for she had attired the bride-elect on that fatal morning, and could answer for every shred of clothing she wore. But Jean Malcolm, though urgently sought, could not be found.

The next day after the arrest, the prisoner was taken before a magistrate, and friends and foes being present, Mr. Spires acting as plaintiff, submitted his case in a neat, concise narrative of the events which caused him to make his charge. It was a case which told powerfully against Alexander Buccleugh. The judge's face grew grave and portentous as he listened; Anthony Drummond oftentimes wiped his reddened countenance, and darted fiery and indignant glances at the imperturbable Spires; Lord Audley Tresilyan, standing near the prisoner, heard with down-dropped eyes and contracted brows what was, in effect, one unbroken chain of circumstantial evidence against the prisoner; and Harold Russel, the talented young lawyer, took down in short-hand the darkening record, to be weighed and dissected and tested, when the final struggle should come.

In a slow, deeply significant, yet monotonous tone, Spires read the narrative amid the most perfect silence and attention.

It commenced with a circumstantial account of Alexander Buccleugh's previous history, his relations with Miss Buccleugh, and all particulars relating thereto; then the Hazeldean story was dragged from obscurity and placed side by side with Alexander's Edinburgh life, his Edinburgh bride, and that estrangement which was known to have been between them. There was one item in the chain which told fearfully against Alexander. Calmly and dispassionately it came out that the accused's cousin, whom at one time he thought to marry, had become possessed of an additional £20,000 by the death of her maternal grandmother, just ten days before the union with Miss Calvert was to have taken place; that despite Alexander's former desertion, Miss Buccleugh still loved him, having given ample proofs of it, and that there was reason to believe they



had acted in concert since the disappearance of Miss Calvert, as could be seen from the manner in which Miss Buccleugh comported herself toward him.

The fortune, of which Alexander should have been a sharer, was then spoken of; his comparative poverty; his actual embarrassments arising from his purchase of Denburn. The quarrel was rehearsed, and Moray's secret attachment placed beside it; thus the key to the puzzle of the quarrel was given—*jealousy*. Then Moray Hazeldean's six weeks' trip to the Highlands, during which the marriage was arranged and peace restored—the bride's variable spirits—her appeal on the morning of her disappearance—the impetus given to Alexander Buccleugh in the shape of £20,000—jealousy of Hazeldean, and attachment to his cousin, Jessie—all these circumstances were linked together so as to present an unbroken chain of evidence against the accused, and prepared the hearers for the explanation of Glencora's disappearance.

“On the 25th of July, at half-past five o'clock in the evening,” Mr. Spires continued to read, “Alexander Buccleugh and Glencora Calvert left the house of Lady-Bank, and walking out of sight of the inmates, were lost to view for some time. It is to be remembered that Mr. Buccleugh had just walked up Gower lane from Edinburgh, therefore if any carriage had been concealed in the lane, or had passed through the lane, he had an opportunity of knowing it. Two carriages had been in the lane when he walked up; one belonging to Lord Kilcourcy, which passed up from Edinburgh at five o'clock; another, unknown, which turned in front of the most private part of Lady-Bank's grounds, and sped back to town between half-past five and six, as vouched by the Lady-Bank gardener.

“When Mr. Buccleugh came up to Lady-Bank from Edinburgh, he did not enter, as usual, but stood at the open window and hurried Miss Calvert out to accompany him. She stepped out just as she was, without bonnet or cloak, and slipping a note-book, which she held in her hand, into her pocket, she walked with him down to the avenue gate in sight of the house. Nothing passed down the avenue; he placed a holly-spray in her hair. As they paused at their gate he tied her pocket-handkerchief round her head. That holly-spray was found next day in a carriage at Mr. McJennet's stables; that handkerchief has been recognized by Miss



Florice Calvert as that of her sister, upon the dead body found on the shore of Leith!

“Now mark these coinciding facts:

“*Firstly*—A few minutes past four of the same evening, a strange-looking man hired a carriage from a cabman belonging to Mr. McJennet’s stables, and paying him five guineas to wait at a tavern until his return, drove off. Between half-past five and six o’clock the gardener of Lady-Bank, coming up Gower lane with a load of flower pots, met a carriage with a strange-looking man on the box, and an old gent inside, sitting with his back to the horses. About seven o’clock Mr. McJennet’s man and carriage arrived at the stables, the man much intoxicated and the horses blown. In this carriage was found a *holly-spray*.

“*Secondly*—At five o’clock on the evening of the 25th of July, Moray Hazeldean, having that day received a note from the unknown lady with whom he was in love, left the stables of Mr. Buckle, in a covered carriage, informing his brother that he was going to succor the lady from a man who was about to marry her, and of whom she was in terror. At seven o’clock same morning, Moray Hazeldean rushed into the stable-yard where his brother awaited him and cried that she was gone. ‘That he believed her infernal lover had put her out of the way.’ He mentioned nothing of where he had been or what he had seen; he left his brother in the street, and got into a cab.

“When Miss Calvert left Lady-Bank’s house for the last time, she had a pocket-book in her pocket. Clenched within the hand of the woman found dead was found a scrap of paper accurately fitting into Miss Calvert’s pocket-book, bearing these remarkable words:

“‘MORAY HAZELDEAN :—A—— has discovered our love. My inconstancy seals my fate. Before you come, oh, tardy one, I will be no more. Farewell!  
G. C.’

“Now who knows what might have occurred during those twenty minutes that Miss Calvert and Alexander Buccleugh were together for the last time? If jealousy and self-interest actuated him, as has been proved, might not some threat of his during their walk have induced her to dash down those words to one whom she evidently expected to come and carry her away? Arguing that such was the case, might not Alexander Buccleugh have *hired* the strange carriage and man to accomplish a nefarious plot for him,



have concealed them within the gates of an old manor-house, half-way down the lane, until signaled for, have hurried out the lady to the wicket-gate, and there done the deed which avenged him for an inconstant woman, freed him from embarrassment, and left him to marry a rich cousin who loved him? Assuming this, what course would he pursue? Having waited until the maid, Malcolm, was out of sight, he would inform her of her faithlessness to him; in return she would draw out her pocket-book while he was quieting her dog, which would growl at an approaching carriage; she would stand with her back to him, dashing down those incoherent words under her cloak, tear out the sheet, and crush it in her hand with the agony of the death-grip. Her back being to him, he would seize his opportunity, snatch her handkerchief, and make a noose of it, tie it round her neck, and suffocate her, the knot being at the back of the neck. The carriage stopping, he could lift her hastily into the back seat, send it away with a few instructions, strike into a side-path leading down to the canal, fling the pocket-book into the corn—having either wrenched it from the lady's hand for fear of discovery, or picked it up from the ground—return to the house with all speed, and report his losing sight of Miss Calvert as the consequence of a trifling bet.

“Then what is easier than for those two men to drive back to Leith with their dead burden, remove her bonnet and cloak, and all items likely to assist recognition, cast her into the water, and rush back to Edinburgh—one to deliver back the carriage, the other to seek safety in flight?

“Now, for the identification of Moray Hazeldean's ‘G. C.,’ found murdered on the shore of Leith, with Miss Calvert lost on the twenty-fifth of July. Moray Hazeldean had a profile likeness of ‘G. C.,’ at the house of his brother; when Captain Drummond, in his search for Miss Calvert, was led by the Providence of Heaven to the first step in the track, he was amazed, while standing in Mr. Hazeldean's drawing-room, at the accurate resemblance of this picture to his lost ward.

“Miss Calvert, when last seen by her friends, was clad in a black silk dress, trimmed with lace, a bonnet and cloak being added to her other attire before she disappeared from the grounds. ‘G. C.,’ found dead, had on a black silk dress, trimmed with lace, which, being silk,



was spoiled by the water, and rendered undistinguishable. Miss Calvert had in her possession a lawn handkerchief, trimmed with a peculiar pattern of lace, with her initials embroidered in the corner. 'G. C.,' when found, had, twisted so tightly round her neck as to induce suffocation, a lawn handkerchief trimmed with lace, which, being thread, perfectly retained its original pattern, with the initials 'G. C.,' embroidered in the corner.

"Miss Florice Calvert minutely examined this handkerchief, and declared it belonged to her sister.

"Clutched in the dead lady's hand, as has been said, was a fragment of paper mentioning 'A——' as her betrothed. Might not 'A' stand for 'Alexander?' The dates of the disappearance are the same to an hour, the initials of the lost and the found are the same. Circumstances, interest, and revenge point out the perpetrator who alone could benefit by such a disappearance. On these grounds Alexander Buccleugh had been accused of the crime of murder!"

Dead silence followed the reading of the charge.

In a moment up sprang fiery Anthony Drummond, and his voice rang loud and dauntless through the silent chamber.

"It is false!" he shouted, bringing his hand down with angry force upon the desk before him. "It is but a tissue of enormous falsehoods made to bear against an innocent man. Justice—justice!"

So saying, the good captain sat down abruptly, and crossed his legs with surpassing firmness.

Then Lord Tresilyan stepped forward and intimated his desire to be heard for a few minutes.

"There are yet two witnesses to be produced before this charge can be proved legal. In the first place, Mr. Moray Hazeldean must be found to tell the real name of the lady called G. C., her family, and her circumstances. In the second place, Jean Malcolm, the lady's-maid, must be secured, to identify the clothing of her mistress, if such they prove to be. When these persons have proved to Messrs. Spire's and Wynde's satisfaction the legality of their charge, then we shall consider Mr. Buccleugh in danger."

In effect, these words had not the slightest weight in the minds of those present, so indisputably had the lawyer's story heaped proof after proof of guilt on the prisoner.



In gloomy and ominous silence, the necessary formulas were gone through, and Alexander Buccleugh was remanded to prison to await his trial for the murder of Glen-cora Calvert.

So the luckless champions gathered once more around their poor fallen friend in his cheerless cell, and the choleric captain nearly broke his heart as he took his place by Alexander's side. And while thus he fumed and writhed under his friend's wrongs, Lord Tresilyan and Harold Russel were equally busy in a corner over a pile of papers and law books, deep in eager, whispered consultation, and imperious to all around.

Then the cell door was opened, and the turnkey admitted a wiry, ugly little man, whom Alexander, after some examination, assumed to be Mr. Simon Curtiss.

Mr. Curtiss seemed much moved by this recognition.

"Oh, Mr. Buccleugh, how dared they do it?" he muttered, clenching his lean little hands. "How dare they pitch upon you, sir, the very soul and body, too, of honor, as I'd swear to, sir, in all the law courts in Scotland. But I'll fetch them all aback; at least I'll try; and that's what brings me here, sir."

"What can you do, Curtiss?" asked Alexander, mildly, looking from his mean pallet.

"I'll explain how, sir," answered the small man, sinking his tones into modest diffidence, as before. "Moray Hazel-dean is wanted, as Lord Tresilyan said to-day, and I've been thinking since maybe I'd be of use to find him, as I know an indifferent deal about such jobs. I'd have gone off on my own hook, sir, and fetched him back with me to refute all their humbug, but, honored sir, there's only one thing stopped me."

"What was that, Curtiss?" asked Alexander, pressing his hands.

"Want of money, sir," quoth the little man, with a blush; "and I thought maybe if I could get a lift along in the way of expenses, I'd be master of the situation. I'd search the continent, sir, and find him in three weeks; I could do it, sir, if you'd trust me with the job."

"To be sure we'll trust you!" cried Captain Drummond, seizing his hand in a blacksmith's grip. "God bless you, man! You're just what we want!"

The two other gentlemen, who had been attracted by the



little fellow's vehemence, and were standing close behind him, exchanged glances of congratulation and pleasure.

"Why, you're the right man in the right place!" cried Lord Audley, hastily. "We don't want a more willing agent than you, Mr. Curtiss, to undertake this difficult business."

"He's innocent, you know, your lordship," said little Curtiss, breaking down at being seconded by so great a being, and wiping his eyes hurriedly with his scarlet bandana. "I'd rather be cut into cat's meat than see so good and true a gentleman perish by the law for a stupid pack of lies. It would disgrace the law, your lordship; bless you, it would, for he's innocent!"

"Right, man, and God bless you!" uttered Anthony, much affected.

Alexander looked around on his friends.

Well, there were some dark clouds in the world for him; but were not these true, and loyal, and brave to the core? His heart thanked Heaven for this.

"You want a little fitting out, do you?" said Lord Audley. "To be sure; you shall have every convenience, Mr. Curtiss. I'll see that you are well provided for your journey. Call at my hotel, the Royal Arms, Prince street, in the course of two hours, and you'll find a check awaiting you, and her ladyship, as well, to wish you Heaven's speed on your enterprise."

Mr. Curtiss, blushing, and almost sinking beneath combined honors and condescensions, pulled his gray forelock many times, turned to Alexander, and with one long, mute, indescribable gaze of fidelity, wrung his hand, and modestly retired as suddenly as he had appeared; and the friends continued their consultations uninterruptedly for many hours.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### HAROLD RUSSEL'S PROPOSAL.

Florice Calvert and Jessie Buccleugh were with the Lady Rosecleer in the hotel in Prince street when Lord Audley and Harold came from their long interview in the prison. Two paler lilies might not be seen than these poor girls, as,



with utter silence, they listened to my lady's gentle conversation and comforting acts, to win them from their care.

The blow which had come upon them was terrible. But, of the two, Jessie Buccleugh writhed most under it; for, while Florice tearfully and fondly clung to sweet Rosecleer Tresilyan, *she* turned, with bitter shrinking, from every scrutiny, to feed on her own stricken heart.

Florice mourned a lost sister and dear friend. *She*, a misplaced love, and the threatened destruction of the object of her passion. Cold and rigid, she kept aloof from the penetrating Lady Rosecleer, and, with tortured suspense, waited for some arrival from her cousin, that she might know her fate.

A wild, roseate flush suffused her face, as, at last, Lord Audley and his friend entered. She half rose from her position at a distant window, as if to meet them; but, restraining herself, sank back, and watched them, her eyes black with excitement.

"Ah, welcome, truly, my dear Lord Audley! Welcome, dear Mr. Russel," said Lady Tresilyan, making room for her husband beside her. "You come much desired by these two poor little girls and me. Go, Mr. Russel, and comfort that little woman in the window. Give her the sunniest side of your picture of the case."

Mr. Russel, who had been unrolling his report of Spire's case, paused, glanced at the remote figure between the curtains, and, rolling it up again, placed it carefully on the *buffet*, and joined her.

She looked at him with great blue-circled eyes, and ashen shadows round the small, sweet lips, and somehow the sight of her care-worn face, more tenderly sweet now than ever in its days of merriment, probed Harold's heart with, perhaps, the bitterest resentment he had ever harbored for a lovely woman.

"Where is he, Mr. Russel? Tell me every thing!" she exclaimed, flushing with impatience. "Why do you not explain in a word whether my cousin is safe or not?"

A stern, cold expression crept to the young lawyer's face as he stood looking down at her.

"I'll win her yet, if there be generosity in woman," he thought.

"Your cousin is remanded to prison to await his trial,"



he answered her, calmly. "His case is made very black by some circumstances, which, unfortunately for him, have come to light. But, Miss Buccleugh, I, who believe him guiltless, will try to do the best with my client."

"What circumstances?" demanded Jessie, with knitted brows.

"Do you wish to know all the particulars?" queried Harold, with a grave smile. "Then read the faithful copy of Spire's charge."

He took the report from the *buffet*, handed it to her, and with a slight, lingering glance of significant meaning, turned his back on her, and joined the others. And Jessie, gazing, half alarmed, at the roll of manuscript left in her hand, as if in prescience of how vitally its contents touched upon her name, at last summoned courage, and began to read.

"Buccleugh has been committed for trial," said Lord Audley, taking the cold little hand of Florice in a comforting clasp; "but we intend to make it a rather difficult business for them to convict him. My dear little friend, take courage! We shall clear him triumphantly; it is the will of Heaven that justice be done."

Florice covered her face with her hands, my lady rested her beautiful head on her husband's shoulder, and clung to him with a sudden passion of tears.

"Audley," she cried, "they have not proved that poor corpse to be *Glencora*?"

"That is the question," replied my lord. "*Have* they proved the identity of the found woman with that of the lost? Spires, and Wynde Hazeldeane, and the court say yes. All friends of Alexander Buccleugh, and of that pure and loyal lady, say no. Rosecleer, I have no hesitation in saying, that if Moray Hazeldean, and Glencora's maid Malcolm were found, as witnesses for or against the prisoner, this black case would be found to be no case at all."

Florice listened to this with kindling interest.

"How?" she cried, "have they found anything to lead them to suspect Jean Malcolm of any participation in this affair?"

Lord Audley hereupon gave a succinct account of the evidence—having an admirable memory he omitted no detail which bore upon the case—unless, indeed, that un-



happy revelation or accusation against Jessie Buccleugh. The two ladies drank in his narrative with astounded ears.

"You are right, my lord," said Florice, "Malcolm must be found; a suspicion has struck me more than once within the last few days that she actually knew something more of the disappearance than she chose to tell. And I remember now that the cook told me that shortly after Glencora disappeared she saw Jean thrust a piece of gilt-edged paper into the kitchen fire."

"Bravo, Florice! You've found it!" exclaimed Harold Russel, bringing down his hand, in unwonted excitement, on the table. "You've found the missing sheet of Glencora's pocket-book. She did not write that scrap found in the dead woman hand."

"And now, Harold, the lady's-maid must be found," said Lord Tresilyan.

"She shall be found, my lord," answered Harold, throwing up his head with an elated laugh, "and we'll free our noble friend. Hurrah!"

A slight sigh reached his ear. He turned quickly, and met the eyes of Jessie Buccleugh fixed upon him mournfully, yet with softened interest; her face was ashen pale, and a stricken, humiliated look haunted every feature.

With a faint signal to him, she rose, and noiselessly left the room.

Tingling to his finger ends, the young man took the first opportunity to follow her, and seeing the door of a drawing-room across the corridor ajar, pushed it open and entered. As he approached, almost uncertain in the dusky glimmer of green silken curtains and faintly sparkling crystal gasaliers, whither to bend his steps, his ear caught that low, labored sigh again, and looking athwart the gloom, he discovered Miss Buccleugh's slight figure on a lounge with her face buried in her handkerchief, while the report of the evidence was still in her hand, pressed convulsively to her bosom.

With a step he was beside her, gently taking possession of her hand and raising it to his lips.

"Why have you done this?" murmured Jessie, with low tones.

"To show Miss Buccleugh how her love, if misplaced, may help to sap a noble and guiltless life," he replied, solemnly; "it was needed that you should see how fatally



your feelings for your cousin have been made to act against him. If you have been misjudged, then such a charge can give you little pain. If those spies upon your secret heart——”

He stopped to steady his rising emotion.

“If they have guessed aright, then Alexander Buccleugh, true and loyal to the core to his lost bride, may be sacrificed before a weak woman’s devotion, and Harold Russel, loving for the first time, is unrequited!”

Miss Buccleugh here dashed down the fatal paper, and lifted a face brave, tearless, and resolute.

“If I, by a woman’s weakness,” she cried, “have helped him so much as a hair’s-breadth toward his ruin, I will clear him before all the world, even to the laying down of my life. Harold, I frankly tell you that my whole heart and soul are devoted to him, and yet I knew it not. Now that my miserable folly confronts me, I would tear out that heart and throw it in the fire before it should betray him to ruin. But I wish publicly to clear him from this charge, and to dash the scorpion lash in their own teeth, that they shall no longer make a hinge of me. Tell me, my friend, what can I do? Tell me how I can prove to all the world that there is nothing between us.”

“There is one way to prove that,” murmured the young pleader, bending toward her with soft and tender glances.

“Show to all the world which is the man you *do* love.”

“Harold, you once loved me—do you still respect me?”

Then he clasped both her hands, and answered vehemently:

“You have committed a great error, Jessie; but I believe you when you say it was unconsciously. Yes, I respect you fully—yes, I love you fondly, absolutely. My whole life and my inmost heart are yours, Jessie.”

A proud, grateful smile passed over the girl’s face.

“You are noble and generous,” she said, “and I long to prove to you my gratitude. Take this hand; trust it, for it is the hand of a woman who would scorn a dishonorable thought, and if Jessie’s esteem and faith in you will do for a bride’s passion, believe me that love will come when she is bound to you, and your life shall be none the less happy that you have taken to your heart a weak and foolish girl.”

This little speech transported the clever pleader so much that he clasped her in his arms, and swore, amid tender



caresses that he was the happiest fellow in the world that summer night, and that Alexander should be a free man for the express purpose of attending the wedding.

And as, an hour afterward, the pair emerged into the hall with quiet, deep happiness imprinted upon their faces, they met my lady Rosecleer and Florice tripping down stairs in full traveling costume, while in the hall below was a most animated and busy company. Lord Audley, more excited than usual, was eagerly explaining some important subject to Captain Drummond, who, hat in hand, stood by the open door, with amazement depicted on his brown face. The plebeian little figure loomed remotely in the distance, among gleaming carriage-lamps, and while Harold stared he got into a small cab, tucked in his black bag, nodded up to the door, and trotted off, leaving a carriage and pair still waiting before the door, into which sundry trunks were being stowed.

"Why, what's in the wind?" ejaculated the young lawyer, at last catching Lord Tresilyan's eye.

"An expedition—no time to explain—a few minutes to train-time. Anthony, here, will tell you all about it after he comes back from the station," answered my lord, getting into a traveling-coat.

"Be off, boy, and fetch a coach to accompany them to the station," cried the captain. "It's glorious!—it's do or die this time!"

Russel, whispering to Jessie to "get her hat," vanished.

Then Rosecleer Tresilyan, with damask cheeks, like the heart of a velvet rose, and black eyes orient with light, looked down on Jessie, and kissing her, exclaimed:

"Good-by, Jessie. We've got *the plan* at last. Good-by!"

And last, with brimming hope and sweet liquid courage in her eyes, came Florice Calvert.

"We'll win the victory," she said, with impressive emphasis. "Jessie, look up—look up! God is shining down!"

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## CHAPTER XX.

### THE COMING DOOM.

The wind blew cold and wildly around the gray tower of Strathmore, and the waves dashed high against the lady's



western windows. A bitter night, that heralded an angry morning, scarcely meet for hardy Highland shepherd to pace the moor in; yet my lady met the storm in its fury, and swept through it, a silenced soul, back to her loveless tower.

What recked Kilmeny Strathmore the biting blast and the sheeted brine that met her on her way. For at last was her life unfolded to her, her destiny forecast, her doom prophesied. Long may she muse over her night with the Witch of Strathmore!

In the dawn, mistress and maid knocked loudly at the tower gate, and admitted by the trembling Ronald, came in, all bathed in spray, silent and white-faced, and hurrying across the flags, vanished up the winding stairs, then locked the doors, and ghostly stillness was the order of the day till, in the dreary afternoon, up came Kenneth, Tyndale's second son, a suitor for the Strathmore May.

She came to him, cold as a frozen sea, no flitting scorns and bursts of fiery passions now! My lady's spirit was at last exorcised.

She looked in his face with unearthly eyes, her thin hands tightly clasped, her weak figure leaning against the massive iron window stile; she looked in his face till his heart was like to break, but never a word said she.

Kenneth drew near, and his words were few and eloquent:

“Lady Kilmeny Strathmore, I dare not ask your love, because it was the sweet possession of another, and such women as you exchange hearts but once. I know your loneliness and anguish, your passionate remorse for a bitter error in the past, and that your life will never more flow genially; yet, Lady Kilmeny, I crave to share that life with you. You love the smallest pebble in Aberdeen better than all Strathmore; the wreck of your lover more than the worthiest man in broad Scotland; and rough fate has decreed you to marry either Robin or Kenneth. Do you choose between two hearts that lie equally loyal at your acceptance, or will you give this frail hand unquestioningly to me, because I come first?”

A faint flicker of the royal eyebrows disturbed the serenity of her countenance. She lightly laid a wan hand on his thrilling breast, and her black eyes scanned his face.

“Do you *love* Kilmeny Strathmore?” softly spoke she.



But his sensitive cheek crimsoned, his ingenuous eyes sought the floor.

"I have never dared to love you, Lady Kilmeny. Hitherto it has seemed like presumption for me to hope for your hand. Yet, tell me may I love you now?"

"No, no, Kenneth Strathmore!" breathed my lady, low. "Reserve that chivalrous heart for brighter May than gloomy Kilmeny. You would never be happy with me, and happiness is greater than state and castle. Kenneth, for one short hour of that life I once so merrily lived, I would lay me down and die. Be content, cousin. Your heart is not cursed with love for me. Therefore I may be true to the House and yet say no. There! go, and get free from my gloom. Let me wait for the end."

She swayed from him, a cold despair chalking lip, brow, and cheek; she swayed dizzily aside, and signed for him to go; but, with keen face, instinct with generous feelings, he caught her feeble hands and kissed them, with kind solicitude.

"Be calm, sweet Cousin Kilmeny!" besought the student, mournfully. "Heaven does not send such bitter storm but to presage a fair to-morrow. You will yet be happy in the devotion of a noble heart which beats for you alone. Your generous soul will respond to it in time. Farewell, dear lady; I will trouble you no more."

And he quietly crossed the room, and passing out, he softly closed the door; and my lady hung her quiet face on her breast, and prayed for an end to her unhappy life.

"And now," sighed my Lady Kilmeny—"now shall Robin come, the loyal and true, and I dare not say him no. Alas! that lightsome heart should be linked to such heavy woe! Poor Robin! poor Robin!"

But all her moaning might not avert the Doom.

So the day set in blackness and mist, and once more the storm king roved abroad in his whirlwind car, to lash the elements into ungovernable fury; and once more dire astonishment and fell rage ruled high in Bracken Hough, while the student, Kenneth, told his tale quietly, and without laments.

"My malison on ye baith, for a pair o' loons!" roared Laird Tyndale; "a gay pickle ye ha' made o't amang ye! But here's Robin yet, an' she aye favored him maist. Maybe ye'll win her Robin, if the auld cloutie is na in her."



Robin, striding back and forth in the darkening hall, his two tall hounds dogging his steps with waving tails, and meekly laid ears, turned the corner of the huge table sharp, and strode up to his father and elder brothers, with brown face smiling curiously, and blue eyes lowering curiously; and as he spoke, his hounds squatted at his feet and watched him, and wagged their tails when his eyes fell on them.

“Father,” smiled Robin’s lips, while his brow grew darker. “I’m ready to say my say to Lady Kilmeny as soon as ye like; but dinna think to put phrase in my mouth. I ha’ lang kept by rote the words I’ll say to Kilmeny Strathmore when I gang to woo her. Let me gang my ain gait.”

“Bravo, Robin!” cried the keen laird, well pleased. “If ye’ll but avert the war-lock, ye’ll win a bonnie bride.”

“A bonnie tigress,” growled Major Gavin in his beard.

“Poor, luckless Niobe!” muttered Kenneth to himself.

“How shall breezy Robin thaw that frozen heart?”

But Robin kicked his tawny dogs up, and marched off to the stables to look at his favorite thoroughbred, to jest with his grooms and peasant people, and to win by his comely good nature the hearts of his father’s clan from the stern old chieftain.

There was many a hind in broad Strathmore that would follow Brown Robin, come weal or woe, and grimly did the crafty laird eye the fact askance.

And so another day came in, a day of stormy waiting for my lady—of tears, and prayers, and trembling for her maid. Fair, serene, smiling, unlike the day of doom, as roses are thunderbolts—yet this rose of days bore in its heart the Doom of Strathmore.

Will she wed or will she die?

The wiry laird, picking fast over the stony road to Strathmore, would fain wrest foreknowledge from sunny firmament or emerald earth, which his sharp eyes constantly glowered at, but Robin never curved anxious eyebrow over the question, but galloped on his gallant mission, unvexed by secret query.

They rode into Strathmore Tower, and clanked up stairs to the audience-chamber. And scarce had the glum old steward withdrawn, and they had seated themselves, than in dropped Lady Kilmeny, a hectic blaze on each poor cheek, a wild unrest in the glittering eyes.



She bowed in bitter courtesy to her uncle; she turned meekly to her cousin, and like a child she came to him and gave him her hand.

"Robin—Robin!" sighed my lady, faintly. "You too!"

As if she had hoped and hoped, yet dared not wonder that her hope was false.

But he held that sweet hand in close clasp, and gazed upon her with sad reproach, and his great heart thrilled with fear and pain.

"Rest thee, cousin," murmured wild Robin, the hunter. "I'll ne'er be the man to woo thee against thy will."

He threw cool regards on his grim father.

"She's near enough the Strathmore vault now, Laird Tyndale, do you see?"

The old laird hitched uneasily under the accusing gaze of Robin and the unwonted silence of my lady. What made the girl so slow-tongued to-day, so soft and meek and heavenly sweet? Dying? Heaven forbid! The old man blanched deathly white at the very thought.

No, no, 'twas *love*. She loved Robin. See that half-timid look fixed on him; that patient and submissive attitude of attention.

The laird shook off the curious chill that was running down his back, and began with a usual oration.

"My lady, after what happened yesterday, you maybe know what errand we are on this morning. I come to plead with you for Strathmore weal. Robin comes to pray you to listen to his suit. Are you ready at last to fulfill your vow, Lady Kilmeny?"

My lady looked not at the laird, but still in Robin's face.

"Robin, before I agree to your demand, you must agree to one of mine," said she, curious lights flickering from eye to lip. "There is something must be explained before you make any proposal. Laird Tyndale, why do you frown on me? I have something to tell him!"

With a scathing flash of her old scorn she shot this at the laird who stood aghast, while Robin stared from one to the other.

"Kilmeny, my lady," stammered the laird, "let the proposal be accepted before the story is told. I beg—I command you, Robin, to make your request," cried he, beside himself with fear.

But Robin turned a deaf ear.



"Let my lady speak for once, unchecked," said he stubbornly. "What do you fear from her mouth? She at least can speak truth."

So the laird fixed a basilisk gaze on her resolute face, and bade her say on.

"Your prophecy says nothing about the disposition of Strathmore's wealth," began the lady, whose collected manner showed that the subject had been well conned in her mind; "and only refers to the marriage of the May. Learning this, I have at length arranged my future course to my own satisfaction. I wish to offer my kinswoman, Lady Rosecleer Tresilyan, an equal right to the property you forced me to usurp from her. I shall claim no more than is justly mine. Laird Tyndale, you know how much is justly mine."

She paused, a soft tremor had run through her words, and now a tear blinded her eye.

But Laird Tyndale watched her with a cruel gaze.

"What makes you want to do this?" hissed he between his teeth; and in spite of himself his heart beat loudly as he awaited her reply.

She bent toward him, a certain unearthly triumph on her worn face, her slight fingers clasped over her swelling bosom.

"Because, good laird, I have spent a night with the Witch of Strathmore."

He bounded from his chair with a stifled oath, and grasped her fragile arm savagely.

"What was the doom she gave you, girl?" demanded he, in the choked voice of suppressed passion.

Lady Kilmeny's eyes were drenched in awe; her pale lips gathered a desperate smile.

"If I am disloyal to my house I must meet the doom of Lady Gillvray Strathmore."

She bent to his ear, and her lips framed two little words inaudibly, and the laird stood transfixed, with the cold sweat oozing out on his forehead, while she slipped from his relaxing hold, and turned aside to grieve sternly over the fate of the hapless Flower of Sutherland.

With returning fire to his eagle eye, and high nose more arrogant than ever, the laird paced heavily to and fro.

At last he stooped over her with insinuating address.

"My lady, knowing what you know, and what I meant



to tell you in due time myself, does it not behoove you to be doubly mindful of the interests of your house, and not to cast behind you every advantage and birthright for the sake of sickly sentiment?"

She looked up imperatively.

"No arguments shall induce me to contest the property another day, sir. At once I shall stop litigation. Unless you agree to this I cannot agree to Robin's request, come what will. Let me but meet with her"—my lady's tones softened to tremulous music—"and we shall strive no more for black Strathmore Tower, for I will not be lady here till she bids me be so. Lord Tyndale, I have resolved."

The laird straightened himself with a dry sneer, and looked at her from tip to toe.

"My lady, you are a magnanimous soul; let us see if your honor extends to the fulfilling of your sworn vow. Well, well, give Strathmore a true-blooded bride, and you shall e'en have your way. Robin, I adjure you, sign the contract and get her signature. My lady, you have promised fairly enough, now perform."

With which the old man hurried to the door, gave one beseeching glance at Robin, a helpless stare to my lady, and slid through the aperture to wait in the banqueting hall for better news.

Lady Kilmeny sat by the swung window, her patient face toward Robin, soft and sorrowful, till he raised himself from the constrained attitude he had maintained during his father's interview, and steadfastly returned her gentle gaze.

"Robin, make your request," sighed my lady, in a tone that shook his breast with evanescent rapture.

He strode across the sumptuous chamber, and stood over her, tall and comely, and with passion thus he spoke:

"Lady Kilmeny, do you know that I love you?"

And she, mournfully:

"I know it, Robin."

"Yet you have not loved me, Kilmeny, nor tried to love me."

She hung her head in convicted silence.

"And you cannot forget what true love was, my lady?"

She gasped a faint "ah, no—ah, no! Yet, Robin," with infinite pathos, "I will try to forget, for your sake, I will



make as faithful a wife as you deserve, if not as leesome a bride. I trust you, Robin."

His hands fell on her shoulders, he bent and looked in her face with anguish and reproach.

"Kilmeny, you believe I love you, and you trust me, yet you treat me as your most ruthless foe. Do you then believe me capable of the dastardly deed of dooming my beloved to a living death, of wearing out her sore heart by my unwelcome devotion? No, lassie, you are free. By heaven and earth, I will not marry you till you turn a loving face and stretch out your hands for Robin in true love. Sweetheart, if that were ten years hence I would wait for you, for I'll never love woman as I've loved you. There may be many years for both of us yet, then why force a lot upon you which you cannot bear? Mourn your lost days yet awhile, my lassie, and when the grief is past then remember Robin."

In a sudden access of emotion he raised her from her chair and clasped her fondly to his noble heart, and she with looks of amazement and anxiety clung to his arm and strove to speak.

"My promise, Robin, and the Doom!" gasped my lady, with throbbing heart.

Holding her close he scanned each lovely wasted feature of face and form, and Brown Robin's heart swelled high with grief and love.

"Poor wan wraith!" sighed he, with a trembling accent. "What cruel laws are Strathmore laws for thee. But fear naught, my bonniebel, it is not you this time who has broken the vow; it is bold Robin. And curse or doom shall never fall on you while I have a stout right arm and merry men at my back to defend you withal. Cheer you, poor bird; you are safe as long as I am above the sod."

He lifted her like a child and carried her upon his broad breast to a couch and tenderly laid her down; he kissed her clinging hands, and bent his hot face upon them, and brown Robin's cheek waxed cold with the wrenching of his wishes from his will.

For she might have been his wife, and she might have come to love him well, and he dare not speak the words that linked her to him forever. His heart fought hotly with his honor.



My lady's great, wistful eyes were glittering, and adown her cheeks slow tears were flowing.

"Noble man!" sobbed Lady Kilmeny; "Heaven will bless you for this day's mercy on a poor drowning soul. You little know the awful fate you have saved me from."

He raised his face quickly from her hands and caught her vivid expression.

"Tell me the fate, Kilmeny?" prayed he.

And she murmured, shuddering.

"*Insanity!*"

"But now?" asked Robin in a hushed voice:

A smile, sudden, sweet, and strange flitted over that piteous countenance.

"But now, good Robin, I shall die shortly, at rest, and with all my loved around me, and Rosecleer's kiss shall be the last on these cold lips. Heigho! I shall soon lay me down beside the bonnie Flower of Sutherland, never more to be sundered——"

For a time there was silence between these two who had met for such different purposes.

At last Robin aroused himself.

"My father must be informed of my decision, for I shall not call it yours. It is anxiety that is wearing your life out, and I shall so represent to him, and obtain his promise to molest you no longer."

She looked up confidingly as he rose to leave her.

"Thank you, dear Cousin Robin," fell gratefully from her lips. "Come back very soon and hear my plans."

And so they parted, Robin and Kilmeny, and the Doom approached with rapid stride—the *Doom of the Double Roses*.

Straight to the banquet hall trod Brown Robin, and stood before his anxious sire, half smiling, yet half sad.

"Her answer, lad?" cried the hasty laird.

"Tears and a blessing," quoth brown Robin.

"And the wedding-day, Robin?"

And the bold hunter laughed with derisive laughter, that shook the rafters.

"Oh, we have postponed that, my father," quoth he, with sarcasm.

"How long?" faltered the laird, scenting danger.

"*Forever!*" replied the youth, composing himself.

"Father, I refuse to ask Lady Kilmeny's hand in marriage



until she can love me enough to call me to her feet, which will never be. She has fallen a victim to your most atrocious system of coercion. Laird Tyndale, she has but few more days to live, and by that lily hand and wan cheek I swear to be the man that will keep them free from oppression. To your teeth, Laird Tyndale, I tell you I will hold to my oath."

"Robin, are ye mad!" roared the laird. "Do ye consent to gie back the braw lands o' Strathmore and the title and gear to the English traitress, Lady Tresilyan? Do ye consent to gie Lady Kilmeny her certain death if she proves disloyal? The curse, man!—the curse is hanging sae low o'er her head that it's e'en now singeing her hair. Gang awa back, lad, and mak anither *devoir*—she'll tak ye yet; for I tell ye she likes ye weel enough."

Thus wheedling, the unhappy laird strove to turn the opposing tide that was sweeping him on to desperation; but Brown Robin towered frowningly over him, and his eyes shot lurid fire.

"It shall never be said that Robin Strathmore stole the liberty of a weeping May. Do your worst, Lady Kilmeny shall wed no man till she rises from her days of mourning, be they long or short."

"God's malison on ye for a laggard in love and a cowardly rebel!" hissed the laird, transported with fury.

He stepped to an eastern window that looked far over the inland dell, drew it up, and raising a small silver whistle to his lips, blew a blast so high, so shrill and penetrating that the welkin rang again.

"Ha, my lad!" sneered the laird, turning on his son furiously, "we'll see whose side is stoutest. Good claymores and Highland pluck shall front your coward defiance. I see it's all a concocted plot between you an' yon woman, who is making a tool of you, poor child. But we'll redd you out o' the mess, and we'll marry her, aye or no, to Gavin!"

And with that, Laird Tyndale ran to the hall door, with a wary eye on Robin, who, reading in a moment his father's purpose of making his exit and locking him in the hall, sprang after the laird, reached the passage first, and rushing to my lady's audience-chamber, locked it instead, pocketed the key, and leaned his back against the door, confronting his baffled father grimly.



Foiled in each intention at its birth, Laird Tyndale, growling heavily, took his way to the court, and clanked about, sowing sedition between my lady and her few Tower attendants, till up the glen tore the retainers of Bracken Hough. Then ensued a parley, fierce and imperative. Ronald, the gate-keeper, swore that not a man should enter the court without the leave of my lady herself, and Laird Tyndale, meditating and finessing to his heart's content, and all to no purpose, was forced at last to fall on the meek though trusty sentinel, and in a hearty hand-to-hand wrestle, to stretch him in stunned neutrality on the flags, while he snatched the keys from him, and opened the redoubtable door himself.

In they poured, three score strong, peasants, shepherds, and servitors, each drilled to the use of his weapon, and awaited the will of the laird. He made them a speech, this astute laird, a neat little speech that cooled their loyalty and heated their ire, that numbed their reason and awoke their wildest superstition, until loud murmurs rose against the double-tongued maid Kilmeny, who vowed to save the house and now was drawing back from her word; and then he eloquently railed on Robin, who would not marry the May himself, yet upheld her in her rejection of his own brothers; and then sullen eyes looked into neighboring eyes, and beetling brows met under cockaded bonnets, and a dead lull fell on the people—as stiff a throng as ever maddened party orator by sulky silence.

“And now, men, to the attack. We’ll hurl yon dolted sot from my lady’s door, we’ll seize my lady, and we’ll set her in the deepest dungeon in Strathmore Tower till she marries Major Gavin. An’ if he fails this second time in wooing, then, lads, you’ll lose your lady, for the Doom bides na lang from the Judases ad’ Jezebels o’ Strathmore House. Forward, my men!”

And waving his sword with inspiring gesture, the laird led the way to the foot of the stairs.

But what is this assails his ears?

Mumbled oaths—uncouth oaths, dissenting murmurs, and open rebellion! And in the height of it, down stepped Brown Robin, and stood in their midst.

“Rally, my true men!” shouted the fresh, breezy voice of the hunter. “Who will fight for Robin and honor?”

And a rush was made—a shout—a scurry, as opposing



factions struggled to suppress the gathering of Robin's friends to their leader, and the old laird fumed and stamped and roared commands, as his lean face grew blood red with rage.

"Who is for Strathmore?" screamed Lord Tyndale.

And the two forces parted in the midst, a goodly array on either side, the majority, alas, on the laird's.

The leaders, father and son, eyed each other with hearty disfavor.

"Propose for my Lady Kilmeny, and I shall leave the Tower with all my men behind me," growled the pompous laird.

"I'll neither propose for my Lady Kilmeny, nor will I leave a man whole enough to follow you in your flight from her Tower," quoth Brown Robin, between his teeth; "and, moreover, I defy you to harm a hair of her head."

Then Laird Tyndale looked round on the parted throng, a wrathful man.

"Fall on, lads," cried he, in lordly omnipotence, "and first take Robin Strathmore and bind him to yon pillar!"

Ha! ha! As easily might a swarm of midges carry down the bold eagle's nest from Morven Peak! They rushed and they hustled, they hacked and they tore; they forward leaped, and pell-mell spun back again. Yet, Brown Robin stood firm as a rock in the breakers, in the midst of his men.

And hotter waxed the conflict, as stout warriors lay low on the court flags, and Robin's handful wavered, and closer pressed the virulent laird to take him, when, with a sudden sweep of the sword that cleared a space before them, Robin and two of his followers made a sortie, gained the foot of the stairs, and sprang like the wind up the flight to guard the door of the audience-chamber, where lay my lady, comforted by faithful Mysie.

Then, for the first time, he drew his pistols—an unusual weapon in old Strathmore—from his breast, leaned his back against my lady's door, and dauntlessly gazed down the narrow passage to the stairs, where the first pursuer must appear.

"The first foe that crosses the landing is a dead man!" shouted Robin.

And his penetrating tones reached to the court below, where the laird stood triumphant, declaring the victory to



his half-pleased men, and Robin's followers lay groaning, disabled, or dead.

And when they heard that, a sudden lull fell on the human tempest; the little phalanx advancing to the foot of the towers turned back. Laird Tyndale's evil face waxed diabolic.

"An ill death may he die!" cursed the laird, at bay. "Hand awa, lads! I'll gang mysel'. He'll no daur to shoot his ain father. Who'll creep in ahint the shield o' my body?"

And Black Balfour and surly Wedderburn stepped forth.

"Hurrah for Strathmore's laird!" shouted the retainers, all.

Thus the wily wolf hoped to reach poor Red Riding-Hood, and thus were his long claws clipped, and his sharp teeth broken.

The laird's gray locks had but appeared on the proscribed landing, when Robin shouted, sternly:

"Back, father! Dinna risk your body there! It'll fa', sure as death if ye winna turn an' tak' your carles wi' you! When Laird Tyndale fights for gallantry and honor, none so ready to fight at his elbow as Robin the Hunter; but when he crushes a captive woman wi' cunning spite, his blood shall be no more sacred in my sight than the blood o' a stark mad hound. Awa', Laird Tyndale while ye're safe!"

Impressed by the admonition, the shrewd old face disappeared from the landing, and the laird hoarsely communed with Balfour and Wedderburn, half-way down stairs.

Meantime, Robin with his back to my lady's door, heard a loud cry from Mysie, and the suppressed prayers of my lady that he would open the door.

Handing one pistol to one of his men, Robin instantly did so, and met Lady Kilmeny on the threshold, tall and ghost-like as a specter.

She smiled a little as her faithful friend came in, and waved her hand toward one of the deep windows which overlooked the court.

There, scowling through a pane, Robert met the visage of one of the laird's men, who knelt on the broad stone sill outside, and wrenched at the sash to force it open.

Simultaneously with Robin's appearance in the chamber, the head vanished, and frantically the body belonging to it



scrambled down to terra firma again; while Robin, dashing open the sash, was in excellent time to admire the hastily constructed rope ladder that dangled from the sill, and to slash it in shreds with hearty good will. Then, dropping the tattered remnants, with their heavy iron clinches attached, unceremoniously on the heads of the jostling crowd in the court, he turned to the beleagured women.

Mysie, with terrified tears rushing down her cheeks, had been heroically standing between her mistress and the assailants, prepared to battle in true Amazonian fierceness for her lady's sake, and was now crying heartily behind my lady, with her face to the wall.

"This is no place for you, Kilmeny," murmured Brown Robin, with love's own softness. "Ye maun flee for safety, my dove. Ye maun flit to the wee tower chamber, and bolt yoursel' and Mysie in, till I disperse the crows that would pick your bonnie bones. Here are two keys I took this morning from the laird's cabinet, where they hae laid hidden for many a day. This is the key o' yon wee tower chamber, where hang Lady McGillvray's an' Lady Tresilyan's portraits. There ye shall hide for safety till I come back. This is the key o' a subtle trap-door in the floor o' the banquet hall, an' then I shall escape to scour the country for my men. Ye shall hide in unsuspected safety, while I rove in unsuspected freedom, an' afore the day is done you shall rule Strathmore, with two hundred men to back you. My twa sentinels shall keep the landing secure till the castle is full o' my followers, an' then I'll come to you when the day is won. Haste ye, Mysie. Flee up the stairs. I'll guide the lady mysel'."

Throwing an arm firmly around Lady Kilmeny's waist, Brown Robin bore her across the threshold, and in silence half carried her through the devious passages of the deserted tower up stairs to the mysterious tower chamber, so long sealed to her. The nimble waiting-woman preceded, the aged steward, Andrews, brought up the rear, mutely wringing his old hands over the jeopardy of his bonnie lady, and bewailing the day.

The little key was fitted in the rusty lock. It turned with a reluctant grit in the strong fingers of Strathmore. In a moment the door was open. The cobwebs rent from post to post, the dust falling in white powder from the stiff



hinges. Lady Kilmeny and her maid entered, and the door was locked behind them.

“Watch you here, Andrew,” commanded Robin, in a triumphant whisper. “Tell neither friend nor foe where I’ve putten my lady till I come back with half the country to give her back her tower. She’s bolted within, and she’s locked without, and I’ll carry away the key, which the laird thinks safe at Bracken Hough, so if they burned the Tower o’ Strathmore, and riddled the ashes, they wad ne’er find Lady Kilmeny till I find her for them. Bide awee, Andrew, man, she’ll rule right royally in Strathmore, in spite of man or devil!”

And, elated, Brown Robin tramped down stairs to his trusty twain, still ostentatiously guarding the door of the empty audience chamber, whispered them his orders, tramped into the hall, and let himself down through a secret trap-door all true Strathmores knew of in that castle, and so reaching a private stair-way, traversed a long underground passage, which at last emerged into a deep cavern on the sea-shore, and thus escaped a free man, to prove his popularity among the gentry, peasantry, and hinds of Sutherland.

Meantime, the laird, foiled in each little arrangement in turn, retired to the bosom of his people, and, taking possession of the court, conspired and schemed to his heart’s content, his men listening with eyes elongated and mouths agape, to the words of the clever Fox of Strathmore. Hours passed in close debate before Laird Tyndale could make up his mind how to get at the perverse pair who were ready enough to cling to each other for no good, and then, no sooner was the attack agreed on than in ran and rode the laird’s boors from Golspie and the intermediate sheep-fells with notable news.

They whispered it to the warriors under arms, and they muttered it to the quaking tower servants, herding in a cowed knot in a corner; but never a man of them was stout enough to stand before Lord Tyndale and say that word.

“What are ye talkin’ and grinnin’ o’er, ye meddlesome gawks?” blustered the testy laird, resenting the diversion.

Then Wedderburn, the sourest dog in the train, sauntered up to his laird, and crustily snapped he:

“Send us hame, Lord Tyndale, for a’ your wit is but blathers the day, an’ the battle’s lost. My lady has tane



fern seed an' 'scaped us a'. She gangs free in Golspie Tower, wi' a hunder men to back her, while we lurk like puddocks on a stane, yelping at her tower gates!"

The laird turned trembling to the new-comers.

"Wha saw the Lady Kilmeny riding sae gallantly in Golspie whan she fitter for the shroud?" faltered he.

And half a score swore to the sight.

"An' a bonnie, brisk May is she, as she rides with her gentlemen and maids straight to Strathmore Tower to tak' it!"

Then the old man turned him round about, and his face was cold and white.

"Woe worth the day!" muttered Laird Tyndale, with shaking hands. "*The doom has come on Strathmore!*"

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE HISTORY OF GLENCORA.

The citizens of Golspie town remembered long the notable events of that day. The aid of internal miracles seemed called in to intensify its significance. The oldest witch-woman in all broad Sutherland was found dead in her bed, and Strathmore, that portentous September day, lost its revered "spey-wife." Horse-shoes mysteriously disappeared from over hut doors, black cats were marvelously rife, and fairy-rings were given as emeralds on the grass. All nature hummed a trembling mystery, and the sun glowed fierily from behind a gray shroud.

It was not enchantment in the air, and that day did not the spell which cursed the house of Strathmore become a verity? The Lowland steamer was hissing noisily at the dock, and unburdening itself of a goodly throng of passengers. There were a gentleman and two ladies, and followers without number. Surely a *retinue* or an *army*.

The two ladies were young, and each in her way beautiful; yet there was something very remarkable in their manners. While the youngest, a slight, fragile-looking girl, with a pale, lovely face, walked a step or two in advance, looking fully and intently at every window, and every peering, curious face as she passed; the other, a tall, queenly



looking lady, with commanding presence and flashing black eyes, shrank back and clung to the gentleman's arm, with vail jealously drawn over her face, and she spoke in low, suppressed tones, which died to a whisper whenever a Highlander in kilt and claymore appeared on her line of vision.

The gentleman, also tall, pale, distinguished, and quiet, composedly advanced with, however, a wary eye now and again sweeping round the streets, and a word or two of reassurance to his companion. Then there was a dashing young man, with a gay, military air, and like a young cadet or artillery officer, despite his sober suit of brown, directing the movements of some fifty bold-looking fellows, with florid faces, pugnacious glances, and most peaceful attire, all illustrating the possibility of wolves getting into sheep's clothing to further their own ends; all marching silently up the winding street to the largest hotel, which they speedily overran.

When they were quietly established at the hotel, the grand gentleman asked for Mrs. McIntire, the seer of Strathmore, and appeared struck with consternation when he heard that she had that very morning been found dead in her bed; and ere he could make further inquiry in dashed Brown Robin Strathmore.

"The whale kintra has gane mad," he exclaimed; "an' they a' tell me Leddy Kilmeny has been seen wa' a hundred ahint her coming fra' the Lowland steamer. It marm be her weith, and she's deed sin' I left her in dark Strathmore tower, an' a' my men will no deliver her noo."

The obsequious landlord immediately presented the young hunter to the English gentleman at his side, who instantly conducted him to the apartments of the ladies.

The afternoon was dim with fiery heat, and sultry with smothered sunshine, when four equestrians softly rode up the streets, and along the sea-shore road to Strathmore Tower.

Robin rode first, with the tall lady by his side, and wondering cottagers lipped from door to door the rapid tidings.

"Yon's the Leddy Kilmeny, and young Robin the laird's son."

And an old man stacking peats beside his hut stood up, took off his bonnet, and cried:

"Heaven bless bonny Leddy Kilmeny an' her bra' young bridegroom!"



“*Listen!*” whispered the lady, with her finger on her lips.  
“Am I so like?”

“So like, my lady,” quoth Brown Robin, “that ye o’erpowered me wi’ astonishment when first I looked upon your bonnie face. If Kilmeny had your red cheeks an’ summer bloom, sure your laird, himsel, wad na ken which was wife!”

And so the lady, with excitement and rising joy chasing away the lurking dread from her lovely features, rode on gallantly, with a backward glance at her noble husband, following with the pale, attentive girl by his side.

Thickly rolled in the fog from sullen waters to the sodden shore as these four equestrians dismounted behind a high flinty cliff, and gave their horses into the charge of a shepherd lad, summond by Robin. They silently paced the beaten sand low down by the booming surf, where the sea-caves moaned an eternal monotone, and wild crags uprose from many a boiling caldron.

They reached a hidden cave and entered its dark mouth. Four score figures rose from the circling gloom at their entrance; some the English arrivals of the morning, more Robin’s trusty followers; and with swift steps they all penetrated a subterranean passage straight up to the beleaguered tower. They overran the disordered banquet-hall, the dismal chambers of state, and empty saloons, and peered derisively from the windows at Sir Tyndale and his men quarreling in the court-yard, and Robin swiftly conveyed his three companions up to the door of the tower chamber; and here he paused a brief moment, while, for the first time, the sweet face of the fragile girl grew white with fear, and her hands were clasped in momentary agitation.

“My lord,” said Robin Strathmore, “if it be as we think—if your lost one is indeed our Lady of Strathmore, then these sisters shall no more be parted for fifty scheming Foxes, and twice fifty blatherin’ Dooks. *Mysie, open to the Leddy Rosecleer Tresilyan, her lord, and Miss Florice Calvert—all friends of our Leddy Kilmeny!*”

His voice was sufficient. The massive bolt was removed—silently the iron door swung open on its heavy hinges, admitting these three, then was shut with a loud clang by Robin’s hand—and now indeed these strangers met.

Strangers?

The Lady Kilmeny was kneeling before the painted head of a beautiful woman, with large brown eyes of heavenly



sweetness, downward drooping and mystically pathetic, as if prophetic of coming woe to that poor soul, and in small illumined characters were these words:

"Lady Glencora, wife of Lord McGillvray Strathmore."

At her right side was the half-averted face of a most radiant girl, just blossoming into a glorious womanhood; and at first so startling was the likeness, yet *unlikeness* of this pictured face to the half-averted face of the kneeling Lady Kilmeny that one might have thought some witch-like spell had summoned that phantom from the past to mock the clouded and tear-washed beauty of the living woman.

She rose from her study of these pictures at the loud clanging of the turret-door, and turned her wan countenance, in a wild, arrested gaze, upon the prominent figure of the group.

And here were two faces, the exact counterpart of each other, gazing at each rapt feature, with the same full, dark eyes, the same chiseled features and curving nostrils, the uncontrollable mark of kindred blood flushing over brow and cheek and neck of each, making for a brief moment the likeness absolute perfection itself.

Then Lady Kilmeny glanced at the girlish portrait beside her. Excitement paled her cheek, and little Florice hid her eyes in horror and dismay.

For oh! in these two shadow-faces God seemed to have set the seal of life in one and of death in the other.

"Are you my cousin?" breathed Rosecleer Tresilyan, in amazed accents.

"Are you my sister?" whispered the Lady of Strathmore.

"*Glencora!*" shrieked Florice Calvert, clinging to Lord Audley's arm.

Kilmeny Strathmore saw, for the first time, the little Florice—her eyes filled with radiance—she advanced—then stopped amazed, and turned a thrilling glance on Rosecleer's face.

Blood is stronger than water—the blood between *twins* is stronger than love. They swooped forward, these two sisters, parted in the hour of their birth—they clasped hands and flung hungry arms around each other, and knit heart to heart forever in that wild embrace. Florice had wept



and prayed and waited—Florice had toiled and faded in the hard world's storms for the dear sister of her youth, and now, in this hour of finding, a stranger was in her arms, while she stood by unheeded.

White, quiet, heart-stricken, she gazed, until Heaven touched her fainting soul with comfort.

“Thank Heaven!” cried Florice, with blessed tears, “Alexander is saved from a felon's death.”

She heard that name, this poor Lady of Strathmore, and with a grievous shudder she leaned upon Rosecleer's shoulder and looked at Florice.

“Come hither, girlie!” she exclaimed, with a strange, half-crazed utterance. “Come to Glencora, and look in her face, that thou mayst tell Alexander what treachery has done for his bride-elect, then ask him what peace his wealth brings him.”

With a murmured endearment, her hand reached forth and drew the amazed girl toward her. Her mood changed, and, almost fiercely, she caught her in her arms; her fingers entwined themselves in her rippling hair, and her lips fell on sunny waves with smiling curves of tenderness, while fond words, long unused, welled from her heart.

“Yet once, twice, thrice, I will kiss thee, sweet-eyed Florice, for, sorely as thou hast stabbed me, coldly as thou hast pierced my heart, yet of them all thou only returned to crazed Glencora!”

“*Crazed?*” murmured Rosecleer, eying her twin rose with darkening horror in her eyes.

Then Lord Tresilyan approached; gently but forcibly he led the poor Lady of Strathmore to an ancient dais; he smoothed her pillow, and softly laid her down; he took her fluttering hands, and arrested her poor, wandering, feverish eyes from their bewitched searching for Rosecleer.

“Lady Kilmeny,” he said, “your day of deliverance has come. Lie here, sweet heart, among your friends, and let us untangle this web of wrong between us. Florice is nearest your heart; she shall kneel by your side. Rosecleer is nearest you in kin; she shall hold your hands in a sister's loving clasp. I am your brother by a dear tie. As the twin of my wife, the long lost one, I embrace you truly, fondly, and swear to restore you, in Heaven's will, to every happiness.”

He bent down and solemnly kissed her on the brow.



Large tears were rolling down her thin face. She looked wistfully from one to the other, raptly at the agonized face of Florice lying on her bosom. A sudden lurid gleam of *diablerie* lit her black eyes.

"'Traitress!'" she said, with something of her old-time mockery to Sir Tyndale.

Lord Audley checked the cry of outraged grief upon the poor girl's lips.

"Hush!" he adjured, with upraised finger. "There is a story here to be disclosed. We must understand each other."

Mysie, with streaming eyes, and stifled sobs, drew near to listen. Her heart was true and warm, though she was only a servant, and her half-mad mistress was dearer than life to her. Weeping, between hope and sorrow, she laid her head down by Lady Kilmeny's feet, and, with her lips upon them, was comforted.

"Are you Glencora Calvert, lost from Edinburgh on the twenty-fifth of last July?" asked Lord Tresilyan.

"I am Glencora Calvert," she answered, looking in his face with gathering confidence.

His was the only face of the three that she seemed to look upon without agitation. Audley marked this, and kept his electric eyes upon hers until their full power arrested and absorbed her.

"Relate all that has happened to you since you disappeared from the house of your friends in Lady-Bank," said Lord Tresilyan.

"Lady-Bank!" murmured the Lady of Strathmore, with a smile and a rushing tear. "How sweet that sounds!—like a strain of a childish hymn. 'Twas within a mile of Edinburgh town—ah!"

Little Florice, pale and patient, looked up into that bleached face, with a bursting heart, and wondered:

"Is *this* our Glencora?"

Rosecleer bent grievingly down, and tears fell like dew upon her faded double rose.

Audley's cool hand crept with mesmeric influence over the poor bewildered brain, and coy reason revisited her shattered empire.

"Wait a while, Glencora," said Audley, soothingly; "try to remember what happened after you parted from Alexander in the garden."



"I am so confused!" deprecated my lady, with knitted brow. "My head always whirls just when I want to think. But wait; I will try."

She did try to rally her energies, and after a few minutes began, quite connectedly, to speak.

And this is the true history of the Bride-Elect:

"On the twenty-fifth of July, in the evening, I walked down to the shrubbery with my betrothed husband, Alexander Buccleugh. While standing at the wicket gate we made a bet in play, and this was the bet: Whoever should reach the house first, by different paths, should give a pearl bracelet to Miss Jessie Buccleugh on my wedding-day. As we were about to part, my maid, Jean Malcolm, came running to me with my cloak and bonnet. While she gave them to me, she made a sign that she wished to speak to me; then retreated down the shrubbery walk, and waited in a side path. I was apprehensive that something in the arrangements for the morrow had been forgotten, so turned off and hurried after my maid.

"She beckoned to me, and I had to penetrate the cross-path a considerable distance to reach her. Seated upon a rustic seat beneath the large elm tree, I saw an old, venerable-looking gentleman, who rose on the instant, bowed, and gave me a letter.

"'Miss Calvert, this business is urgent,' he said.

"I tore open the envelope, and read, in a strange hand, a request from Captain Drummond to come to him immediately. It was signed in his own handwriting.

"This decided me. I had no fear of foul play; indeed it never struck me. I knew Captain Drummond would just rely on me in any emergency of this kind, and seek to spare Florice; and I determined not to spoil all by any hesitation or loss of time. I wrote a few words to Alexander, in my pocket-book, explaining my sudden departure, and requesting him to break it gently to the family; clasped the pocket-book and gave it to Malcolm, with a charge to hasten home with it; walked back to the wicket gate with the gentleman, stepped into a carriage which had driven up as we advanced together, and drove into Edinburgh.

"The stranger explained, on the way, that he and the captain were old friends; that they had that day met, after a lapse of years, and had taken dinner together on board his yacht; that on coming on shore, the captain had missed



his footing and fallen heavily back upon the deck, injuring himself very seriously.

"In half an hour we stopped, the driver got down, and opened the door and held out his hand to assist me from the carriage. He was so sinister-looking and uncouth, that I experienced a strange reluctance to leave the shelter of the cab, or to trust myself any further with them. However, I dismounted and looked round. We were on the Kirkaldy and Dysart pier, and a small yacht was moored to the end of it.

"In turning round to take my guardian's note from the seat, I noticed the cabman and my gentleman companion exchanging glances. Sudden alarm seized me, and I gazed at them, fixedly.

" 'My dear young friend,' said the stranger, approaching me, 'the captain is really very ill. Malcolm here—don't be frightened, dear, only the father of your own maid—Malcolm asked one of my men as we were coming down, and he said Captain Drummond was becoming speechless. Will you not step on board my yacht where he lies?'

"I looked at the note in my hand; I looked in his face, and determined to be satisfied. I took his hand and stepped on board, and was escorted immediately to the cabin. The captain was not there, and the gentleman, withdrawing, asked me to wait five minutes, and he would prepare him; he was lying in one of the berths. So saying, he shut the door, and I was left alone.

"The yacht was pitching heavily on the incoming tide, and in a few minutes the noise of rattling chains upon deck became so loud that a feeling of terror began to possess me. I approached a cabin window; the blind was nailed down. I listened, and heard the sound of water gushing past the vessel. An awful suspicion crossed my mind. I rushed to the door, tore it open, and fled on deck. Every sail was set, and the pier two hundred yards away.

"I rushed to the side of the yacht, and gazed frantically across the widening space, and midway between I saw a sight which astonished me into silence for a time. A dog was bravely swimming after us, and as he gallantly breasted the waves, the evening sun shone on his poor wet face and silver collar, and I recognized 'Ossian,' my greyhound, the last, the only faithful one of my Edinburgh friends! I looked at the evil face of the man called Malcolm.



“‘Save my dog,’ I said, and pointed out the animal.

“He smiled sardonically, and answered nothing.

“‘Where is the person who took me here?’ I cried, stamping my foot. ‘I demand instant liberty. Set me on shore.’

“As I said that, I saw the Dysart steamboat crossing the Frith. If it was a device about my guardian’s accident, he should be aboard the steamer. I weighed rapidly in my mind the chances of shrieking as we passed each other, or of plunging overboard full in view of those on board. I decided on the last, and quietly crossed the deck to be on the proper side.

“To my chagrin, I suddenly became aware of the man Malcolm standing at my back. I turned round and took out my purse.

“‘I shall pay you handsomely,’ I said, ‘if you rescue my dog, and land him either on the shore or on this deck. How much will you take to go?’

“‘More than you’re worth, fair lady,’ he answered, grinning. ‘No, no—you can’t stand here to signal yon steamer.’

“At that the wretch caught me in his arms. I shrieked with all my strength and strained my eyes. Oh, it was cruel! I could distinctly see my guardian walking arm and arm with another gentleman up and down the steamer deck. In despair I found the wind against me, and my cry could not be heard. Before I could repeat it a heavy cloak was flung over my head. I was lifted from my feet, and in anguish and indignation I fainted.

“I recovered with a sensation of deadly suffocation. The air was close and sultry, the smell of ship’s tar and ropes sickening, and for some time I was quite bewildered. At last I remembered, and tried to spring from the narrow berth in which I was lying; faint and dying I fell back, then my eyes rested on a glass of wine by my side. I seized it and drank it all, determined to give myself strength for one desperate effort at liberty. The wine was drugged, and I fell immediately into a deep sleep.

“My next conscious sensation was of a heavy, burning head, and a loud rushing of water all around. I supported myself on my arm, and looked about. The gray, cold day was streaming in blankly through white sheets nailed over every window. My berth looked out on a very sumptuously



furnished state-room, which I had never seen before; and emblazoned at one end above the door I saw what appeared to be the arms of some noble house. The empty wine-glass had fallen from the small stationary table at my side, and was rolling about with every lurch of the vessel, over the thick, luxurious carpet. I looked for a long time at this pretty, sparkling wineglass, with curiosity and pleasure, as it glided hither and thither, then with a swoop came the thought:

“ ‘This is my wedding-day!’ And with a cry of great despair, I hid my face in the silken pillow and wept. My last girlish tears were shed then. I mourned for Alexander and my loved ones with wild, unreasoning woe. Then I rose, made my toilet, composed myself, and waited. I was determined to sell my liberty dearly, and I made my many wild plans to frustrate my enemies’ conspiracy.

“In the first place I gathered together all my little treasures to calculate their value, hoping that the atrocious Malcolm, if my only keeper on board, might be bought off. I had fifteen sovereigns in my purse, and my watch and chain together might bring twenty-five pounds. That was nothing. But would he be bribed by forty pounds? With a pang I took Alexander’s engagement-ring from my finger, and gazed at it wistfully. *Could* I sacrifice it? But the value? There was a very fine diamond with six rubies, and a marvelously rare setting. The ring could easily command fifty pounds.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE DOOM OF THE DOUBLE ROSES.

“I set my treasures upon the table, and gazed at my little heap with a throbbing heart. Surely that would buy him! But if bribery failed—ah, I was young in spirit then, and my will was wild and fierce—visions of suicide or of reckless vengeance filled my brain. Yes, I would risk all, even to my life, to balk them. But this ninety pounds and fifteen shillings—surely that would do something. I calmed myself, and regarded the heap on the table with a favorable eye.

“A bolt grated in the locked door; with a gasp I looked



up, and confronted the venerable-looking gentleman who had betrayed me into this prison, and as I read his haughty features, and cold gray eyes, my hopes of bribery fell dead in my bosom.

“He gazed at me gravely, and, as it seemed to me, pityingly, then approached, saying that he was my only friend on earth, and that I must trust him, at which he held out both hands to me. But I rose, and haughtily returned his gaze.

“‘How dare you abduct a lady against her will, and steal her from her friends? I demand an explanation, sir!’ I cried.

“He glanced at the gold and money upon the table with a commiserating smile.

“‘Put back your little treasures, poor child,’ he cried; ‘then listen to my explanation, and ask yourself what bribery could do.’

“He seated himself upon the sofa beside me, and forcibly possessed himself of my hand, which he held all the time he was speaking.

“‘In the first place,’ he began, ‘I have not stolen you from your family. You have been given to me cheerfully by them all, an assertion which I can uphold with incontrovertible proofs.’

“‘By Mr. Buccleugh, too?’ I asked, with an incredulous smile.

“He sighed heavily, and averted his face at that.

“‘Alas, dear child,’ he said, ‘you know well how advantageous it would be to your lover to lose sight of you, and marry his cousin. Put not your trust in men; he has succumbed under the influence of temptation, and betrayed you into my hands.’

“With an angry cry I refused to listen to him. I covered my face with my hands to hide the agony his words caused me. I could not, and would not believe it; yet dark horror filled my soul. Home, love, honor, and happiness seemed drifting away forever, and a secret whisper was in my heart, ‘*What if that were true?*’

“‘No more,’ I cried, ‘no more! By Heaven above, I will not mistrust my love!’

“He sighed again, and this time a tear trickled down his face.



“ ‘Your sorrow is agony to me,’ he said, pathetically, ‘for you are mine—bound to me by the close tie of blood.’ ”

“ ‘Explain,’ I ejaculated, turning upon him fiercely.

“ ‘I am your uncle,’ he resumed, in the gentlest of voices, ‘and in your face, haughty and impetuous girl, I behold the noblest and best attributes of our house. The Seer of Strathmore is right, and I clasp to this aged heart the long hidden Flower of Promise, who will stem back ruin and shame from her people.’ ”

“So saying, he clasped me in his arms, and with a subtle thrill of awe I submitted for a moment, with my will lying passive at his feet.

“ ‘You have always believed,’ continued he, presently, ‘that you were the child of Howard and Lucy Calvert, and that you were born on the Pacific Ocean, during their passage to India. This is your true history:

“ ‘You are a daughter of the second brother of Strathmore, of most noble parentage, and, owing to circumstances, the present heiress of Strathmore. There were three brothers to their house, Lord McGillvray, the eldest; Captain William, the second, of whom you are a daughter; and Sir Tyndale, the third. I am Sir Tyndale, your uncle. Do you still believe me an imposter?’ ”

“ ‘Go on,’ I said, chill and faint.

“He then told me that, owing to a feud in the house, I had been concealed at my birth, and as my mother had died then, I was conveyed by a daughter of the Seer of Strathmore to Edinburgh, offered to Dr. Howard Calvert and his wife, just going abroad, adopted by them, and secretly taken with my nurse to India. My true history was known to them, and there was an understanding that whenever my house should claim me, I, with my Highland nurse, should leave the family of my foster-parents, and return to Strathmore.

“Here I broke in with bitter triumph.

“ ‘But you can’t prove that I am that infant who was sent away. I shall contest that point in a court of law.’ ”

“ ‘Glencora,’ said the old man solemnly, ‘do not catch at straws. Nourice McIntire, the Strathmore Seer, assisted at your birth. She laid you in the arms of Mrs. Elsie Malcolm, your nurse. She, obedient to the stern Strathmore laws, left her Highland house, husband, and daughter, to accompany you abroad to a safe haven, where your life



might not be sacrificed. Her husband, also strictly obedient to its mandates, came down to Edinburgh with his daughter, trained her in lowland manners, and Strathmore allegiance, and when you came back to live in Edinburgh, at the death of the Calverts, she went as your maid. Her mother died three years after her return from India. On her death-bed she solemnly took Jean's oath that your interests and welfare should be watched over, and that whenever your house demanded you, she should see that you were delivered to them. Under that vow she went to you as your maid.'

" 'What—Jean Malcolm a traitress?' I gasped.

" 'Not a traitress, my child,' he said, 'only true to the interests of Strathmore. But you still disbelieve your own identity. When you were taken from your dying mother, the wife of William Strathmore, the Seer branded your arm with magic arts, that indelibly it should bear the crest of Strathmore; and furthermore, you were named *Glencora*, after the prevailing ladies of our house. Glencora Calvert have you no mark upon your left arm?'

" Trembling and silent, I loosed the fastenings of my sleeve, and drew it up to look at a small, blood-red mark on the inside of my arm, which I had always regarded as a mole. He went to a locker, produced a microscope, and held it over it. 'Look,' he said. I beheld with amazement a distinctly marked griffith, with a chain in its mouth, traced most delicately in scarlet. Instinctively, my eyes fastened upon the emblazoned crest above the door—they were the same.

" 'Glencora,' resumed Sir Tyndale, impressively, 'I have never beheld you before this day, yet by these signs said to be found on the heir of Strathmore, I claim you. You have our crest on your arm—you bear our noblest name—your face proclaims your lineage. In the sacred interests of the house of Strathmore, I claim you as the rightful heir.'

" I listened resistlessly.

" 'Go on,' I implored, 'tell me, though I may belong to your house, by what right you snatch me from my betrothed husband?'

" He bent down and touched my hands with his lips, then went on:

" 'It is very painful to tear a fond heart from the support to which it has clung, but when that support becomes



untrustworthy, it is a merciful act of justice to save the too trusting soul from future misery. My child, your betrothed and Captain Drummond have given you up to me, and have recognized my rights to demand you. With his own hands, Alexander Buccleugh signed the agreement, and at a given time, took you down to the shrubbery gate of Lady-Bank, where I was waiting. Captain Drummond signed the note causing you to accompany me, thinking it most merciful to send you away without a formal leave-taking of your friends; your foster-sister and the captain's sister also recognized the expediency of concealing their knowledge of your approaching separation, and though reluctantly, suffered you to go in this manner.'

"He ceased, and from an escritoire he took some papers, and presently handed me a private letter from Alexander to himself.

"It was true! I had been bartered foully, and for a liberal compensation, as I could gather from the purport of the letter which appeared to have been written four days before. White and speechless with humiliation, I returned the note.

"'Are you satisfied?' he asked.

"'If I am a daughter of Strathmore, then what is my lot?' I asked.

"Then he seated me again, and told me the story of Lady Rosecleer's treachery to the house, and the prophecy connected with her marrying across the border. And that I, the next of kin, to save her life, and maintain the ancient glory of the house, had been taken from my concealment, and would enter the lands as Lady Kilmeny Strathmore, concealing for a time my real name of Lady Glencora, to satisfy some secret interests of the house. I was to be named Kilmeny after a distant cousin living in Aberdeen, who had died a few days ago, and whose identity I was to assume.

"It took a long, fierce struggle to bend me to Sir Tyndale's plotting. At last, on the third day, lying faint and overcome in my berth, I gave Sir Tyndale the promise, to save my Cousin Rosecleer from assassination, by entering her property as Lady Kilmeny, the Strathmore May, who was to avert ruin from the clan. I entered upon my life of state.

"I found falseness and treachery rife in every movement



around me. I was jailed within my tower. I was watched, and wheedled, and directed. Every day I chafed under the suspicion that my position was a dishonorable one. I longed to throw off my seeming, and declare my name; but my uncle proved to me that the aged Seer of Strathmore would be sacrificed immediately by the half-savage clan, for concealing me at my birth, and he also might be destroyed. I saw that I must be silent. I wished to come to some amicable agreement with Lady Rosecleer, but was perpetually threatened with 'the Doom,' if ever friendly intercourse passed between us. My life was hampered, my will crippled, my every wish thwarted.

"At last, finding that mistrust and falseness were the principal points of my uncle's character, I began to question more and more the cruelty of my still beloved family, and the treachery of Alexander, and determined to use Sir Tyndale's own weapon of deceit.

"I wrote a letter to Florice, imploring one word to assure me of their love; one little visit of my guardian, that I might be at peace with them all.

"When that letter went, I was wildly happy for a while. I fed my soul with brilliant hopes, and waited for the Lowland steamer, which would bring my friend, honest and true, to me. The day came at last.

"Alas! my hopes were vain; instead of a friend, I got a letter from Captain Drummond. It told me to be content; that it was better as it was; that he and Florice might come up to the Highlands in about a year, on their wedding tour, and then they might pay me a flying visit; but, at present, he dared not meddle with me, else my House would take umbrage.

"Then there was a postscript from little Florice, soul of my soul, the core of my heart, whom I still mourned inconsolably. She wrote in the highest spirits. She was elated by my good fortune. Then told me casually that Alexander was doing the best thing—marrying Jessie Buccleugh, and building a grand house at Denburn, on the site of the old. The union was to take place the same day on which I received the letter, and inclosed was a scrap of Miss Buccleugh's wedding silk.

"Thus replied my stanch friends to my comfortless heart-cries. Then I saw revealed the hollowness of worldly love. Love was lost to me forever, but duty remained. I



would be loyal to my falling House, and save it from the doom of dissolution.

“My path was clear enough for me to follow, and I would have sacrificed my life to duty. But Sir Tyndale urged upon me that which my soul loathed. I must marry a scion of Strathmore, and my position would be declared, and the House saved from the doom of extinction.

“After Gavin, under Sir Tyndale’s moral lash, had demanded my hand and been rejected, I stole out with my faithful maid to the hut of Nourice McIntire, determined to understand my true position. My brain was busy with some strange speculations, and Laird Tyndale could not or would not explain them. Her life was in my hand, and I threatened to throw it away if she would not reveal that which had been hidden from me. She saw by my crazed eyes that I meant it—she knew by my skeleton face what a veiled existence had done for me—and, with many a spell and incantation, she told me the true history of my life; and this is the tale of the Seer of Strathmore:

“Glencora and Rosecleer were born in one hour by Lady Glencora, wife of Lord McGillvray Strathmore, the chief of the House. Double roses thus blooming on one tree, ruin was sure, according to prophecy, unless one of the roses were severed from the tree and either destroyed or grafted on to alien branches.

“Nourice McIntire, at our birth, chose me, and instead of destroying me secretly, preserved my life that I might rule the life of my younger twin should she betray the House, or take her place should she die.

“Lady Glencora Strathmore, our mother—the sweet, the beautiful, and true—the ‘Flower of Sutherland,’ having violated one of Strathmore’s savage laws, by bearing ‘double roses,’ died on her maternal bed of a ‘subtle Doom,’ the seer said—of a secret poison, more likely, administered by a hand neither cruel nor murderous, but rendered vengeful by ignorant superstition, and wild terrors of coming destruction to the House, should this innocent traitress live.

“So the Lady of Strathmore paid for our life with hers, and Lord McGillvray, all unconscious of the secret tragedy, mourned a pure and noble lady to the day of his death.

“Rosecleer, the younger, reigned in the gloomy tower



of her father; Glencora, the elder, remained concealed—a nonentity to her house—an enigma to her foster-parents—a waif in the hand of God.

“Rosecleer, also, in course of time, violated Strathmore laws by forsaking her people and marrying an English noble. Now came Sir Tyndale’s dynasty. Utterly ignorant of the existence of Glencora, the concealed heiress, he determined to punish Lady Rosecleer Tresilyan by fetching her Cousin Kilmeny, the daughter of William Strathmore, from Aberdeen to usurp the title and lands.

“Proclaiming this intention to his clan, he departed from Strathmore on the tenth day of July, and traveled down to Aberdeen. Three days after, Nourice McIntire was told of this expedition, and with wild and muttered malisons she wrapped her in her plaid, took her staff, and set out for Forres to meet the coming heiress before she should touch Strathmore ground.

“On the 15th of July, Sir Tyndale and Kilmeny Strathmore reached Forrestown on their upward journey. The seer sent for Sir Tyndale, told him of the veritable heiress, bade him send back Kilmeny, and put the eldest daughter of the house at its head.

“Awe-struck and impressed, the laird then went back to his luckless Lady Kilmeny. He told her the whole truth.

“Kilmeny had a proud, furious spirit. She had scornfully thrown off all former ties, when brilliant promises were made her, and now she could not return. Her wild, unconquered heart rose high in rebellion, and swept reason forever from her brain. The Fox of Strathmore spent that night in the Forest Hotel with a maniac. With many a wily art he concocted a scheme by which to turn this catastrophe to his own advantage, and to render it more fortunate than otherwise. He concealed her fate from those friends she had forever parted from; bore her as his daughter down to France, found a private asylum near Paris, and left his hapless charge under a false name, to be supported yearly by a liberal allowance. Before Sir Tyndale had left Paris for Britain, his first year’s payment was returned to him, and a note informed him that his daughter had died in convulsions twenty-four hours after her entrance. Thus fell the second victim to Strathmore’s superstitions.

“Then Sir Tyndale arrived at Edinburgh on the 22nd



of July, watched, and leagued with Malcolm. Letters were forged by my clever uncle, having been assisted by Jean Malcolm, and on the 25th the hapless bride-elect was borne from my loved one's arms. I was made to bear the dead Kilmeny's name, and I took up her life where she had laid it down, and dragged it on well nigh to the asylum and the grave, as she had done before me.

"All this the Seer of Strathmore told me two nights ago, while the storm rocked her cot and the lightning revealed her prophetic face. She knelt at my feet as the gray dawn crept in, and cried with thrilling vehemence:

"'Lady of Strathmore, I've seen a hundred years of Strathmore's weals and woes. I have sinned for my house, and toiled and schemed. But now, my lady, marrow of the English Rose, firstling of the Flower of Sutherland, savior of your father's clan, heed my words. As my shadow falls long upon my grave, Heaven's hand is opened to my eyes, and I see its purpose to you. Tread not in the ways of sin and cruelty to serve your house, my lady. Bleached is your beauty and dimmed your luster among your father's hinds, my lady, for your heart is not with them. Take these golden gifts from the mouth of the Seer of Strathmore.'

"She rose, crossed my hands upon my bosom, and rested her hands upon my bowed head.

"'Never wed but where you love,' she muttered. 'Avert destruction by Heaven's pointing! Wait for God's pleasure! Now, my lady, go home, for the day will soon be born which is the day of Strathmore's Doom.'

"Lord Tresilyan, I have finished the story."

And so was ended the strife and bewilderment of that long search.

Lord Audley was the first to speak, and he spoke with fire:

"Now, Heaven be praised, Glencora! an innocent man will get his due—a noble man will escape destruction. Dear girl, condemn Alexander Buccleugh no more. He has suffered much for you."

Glencora's two hands quivered in Rosecleer's triumphant clasp; her sweet eyes rained eager questioning on my lord's forcibly restrained countenance; her heart beat wildly under the wet cheek of patient Florice.

"Oh, tell me quickly, Lord Tresilyan!" cried she, in a



faint voice, "was I not deserted by my betrothed, and sold by Captain Drummond? Florice!" ejaculated Glencora, wildly, "were you all true to me at Lady-Bank?"

And Florice's smile was rare to see.

"We were true, Glencora," she replied, simply.

Then Glencora broke from my lord and her sister, and she lifted the faithful darling of her childhood from humble kneeling, and laid her in her bosom.

"Florice!—Florice!—Florice!" moaned Glencora, "was *Alexander* true?"

"Ah! yes, dearest Sister Glencora, he was true as heaven! He never loved another, and has searched many a day for his lost love. And now he lies in prison, threatened with a felon's doom, which your appearance only will avert from him. Oh, it's a long story, Glencora, darling."

"Tell me all, my own old friend!" murmured Glencora, with sweet tears oozing from her long silken lashes.

Then they told her all that is contained in this book, traces, suspicions, and defects, on the black day when Alexander was arrested beside the nameless corpse; and though she moved not, nor spoke, her care-worn face was glowing in its ineffable peace. Rest at last—hope at last—joy at last for my lady. Terrors and treachery vanquished for aye. Love once more the lord of all.

"And thus I am to meet my love, ruined in youth's prime, bankrupt in heart, chased to the depths of infamy and suspicion by misguided justice! And what salve has heaven to offer for all his anguish and affliction! A half-crazy bride who shall greet her spirit-wrecked betrothed like a specter of her former self! Oh, my true-hearted Alexander! Heaven judge me for the wrong I did thee! Heaven remember those who made inquisition after thy blood! And yet—ah, sweet Heaven! I thank thee, for he loves me! he loves me!"

Lord Tresilyan stepped to the door of the turret chamber, opened it, and clasped the hand of Robin Strathmore.

He needed not to speak, for Robin knew all. He turned him from that sight in the tower chamber, and spoke to his stout men in the hall:

"Down, lads!" he shouted, in a clarion voice. "Declare in the court the Doom of Strathmore! The Double Roses have met. Lady Rosecleer and Glencora, the twin daughters of Lady McGillvray Strathmore, clasp hands in their



own high tower, and embrace like sisters true, and the warlock falls to the ground; the spell is broken. This day superstition dies in Strathmore House, and the clan shall be ruled as the ladies like, without leave of Laird Tyndale. Lady Kilmeny dies, not in deed, but in name, and the true Lady Glencora rises in her place, to wed whom she pleases, and share the lands as she lists. And I, Robin Strathmore, swear to be her defender through thick and thin, till she rules in peace and safety over Strathmore. Lads, who will follow me?"

And a cheer, loud, clamorous, and fervent, followed this little speech, and Robin, already springing down the winding stone stairs, was pursued pell-mell by his men, with his hue and cry most appalling to alien ears.

Down through the empty castle, still held in sturdy possession by two men at the audience-chamber door, into the hall, where patiently lurked two sharp lawyers, authority in hand, and civil power at their elbow, and tearing up the trap-door, up poured Robin's men from the secret stair-way, and crowded, fully forty strong, around their yellow-haired darling.

And Laird Tyndale, standing firmly in the midst of the swaying mass, with folded arms, and bitter resignation, looked around on the panic with the face of a foiled demon.

The brawl being thus comfortably concluded, up stepped the Edinburgh lawyers, writ in hand, constables in the rear.

"Sir Tyndale Strathmore, you must answer to the charge of forcibly abducting, unlawfully imprisoning, and fraudulently concealing the person of Glencora Calvert, otherwise known as Lady Glencora Strathmore. Sir, come with us quietly."

Laird Tyndale turned him in the crowd, savage as any wolf.

"Ye'll no hold a Strathmore wi' yer lawyer bonds!" hissed he, spitefully. "Stand back, or tak' the length o' my guid Highland dirk i' yer bantam's hearts!"

And Brown Robin turned him also in the crowd, and a tear blinded his eye.

He sprang forward, a leal and filial heart, to save the old man from harm; but Laird Tyndale cursed him furiously, and threatened him with upraised dirk, till Lord Tresilyan forcibly detaining poor Robin, the police officers fell on the ancient chief, wrenched the weapon from him, and led him



to their carriage, which was now standing revealed outside the gate.

Thus the Fox of Strathmore made his exit from the Tower he long had made a prison, his best scheme a failure, his last plan checkmated, and thus agreeably attended, he was driven to the town and lodged in Golspie jail. There, also, were snugly ensconced some half a dozen ringleaders from among his followers, Black Balfore and Surly Wedderburn at their head, for the lives of the unfortunates slain in the fray.

And thus was the long-expected Doom accomplished on the day when the Double Roses met. This last remnant of clannish dynasty was suppressed, its prophecies proved but fables, its superstitions routed, its witch a corpse, its twins alive and well, its chief in the county jail, its people under civil law, its tower protected by the crown, its May to marry whom she pleased.

All rent from head to heel, disrupted, dissolved; this was *The Doom of the Double Roses!*

And so prosaic law conquered romantic superstition.

"Farewell, my sad cage!" breathed Glencora, with a glimmering tear. "The bird is very blithe to flit from your grim bars. When next I come to greet those grim walls, I will no more be weeping Strathmore May."

And so she went her way, with friends and kindred, to meet her lover, never more to part, and the tower was tenantless again.

That night they left Golspie, a goodly throng, *en route* for Edinburgh.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

GLENCORA COMES BACK FROM HER "STEP WITH ALEXANDER."

Alexander Buccleugh lay on a poor pallet, a slumbering prisoner, and dreamt of the Fates that were so closely besetting him, of the luckless woman in her quiet grave, of the avenging scaffold, looming now so near, and his affliction crushed him in his sleep as it dared not crush him in his waking hours. It tore his heart with a sharp sense of wrong and despair, and he moaned aloud beneath the ruthless reality of his dream.



And as he moaned, a breath, faint as a zephyr, swept across his lips—a sweet influence mingled with his woe, and absorbed all its bitterness, and, as once before, Alexander awoke, and raised his eyes to his disturber.

He gasps for life—his dimming eyes try to see her and to keep seeing her; but, ah! poor wasted soul! his strength is gone; he sinks back fainting in Glencora's arms.

And she clasps him close to her noble heart, and she brings him back to life, sweet, perfect life again, with tears and kisses on his beloved face.

Yes, the long lost Bride-Elect has at last come back from her run through the Shrubbery Park, and thus they meet, these old-time lovers, heart to heart, caring little should they never breathe again, since kindly Providence has thus swept them into each other's arms.

“Ah, my Glencora! my proud empress of yore!” sighed Alexander, his arms clasping her fragile waist. “Your dimmed luster is dearer to me than all your beauty in your grandest days! And was this for me? So wasted, and so wan! Oh, love! love!”

With moist eyes he watched that worn face, whose wrecked magnificence but made its loveliness more touching, whose vanished roundness and youthful carelessness but left a more angelic purity instead; but she, stooping, laid her happy head in his bosom.

“Grieve no more, Alexander! We are safe in Heaven's good time, and in His sweetest haven! Safe and together! Oh, my own love, whom I believed false to me, how shall I reward you for all these days of suffering, while I slowly maddened my poor brain in Strathmore?”

A low tap at the door admonished them of an outer world, and presently the bolts were withdrawn, the door flew wide open, and the faithful friends pressed across the threshold to join in the rejoicing of these poor hearts.

Then came the governor of the prison, and a magistrate, and some lawyers, and Mr. Hazeldean, and Mr. Spires, and with gratulations and apologies they made the prisoner a free man, and let him go.

\* \* \* \* \*

But one thing more and this warped history is done.

One day the ladies of the little family were all together in the sunny parlor. They were all idle for once, and lux-



uriating in the sweetest of thoughts, inasmuch as each heart was only busy with sympathy or affection. And while the pleasant spell was on them, a cab drove slowly up through the dun-leaved avenue, and drawing up before the door, a little, lithe, dry-faced man, in rusty black, wriggled out, carefully gathered from the seat his stick, black bag, and note-book, and thoughtfully walked up the steps to Lady-Bank.

Lady Tresilyan glanced out with a ray of surprised pleasure on her face, and Florice sprang to the door to intercept the servant who was telling the visitor that Captain Drummond had gone over to Denburn to view the improvements with Mr. Buccleugh and some gentlemen.

"Dear Mr. Curtiss, is this your safe home again?" cried Florice, with the sweetest welcome in the world. "Come in, sir, immediately; there is good news to tell you, whatever yours may be!"

"I've heard, Miss Florice," observed the detective, glowing; "I've just come from Mr. Hazeldean, the lawyer; he told me."

She led him to the parlor, and he looked around the eloquent group, on happy eyes he had last seen heavy with woe, on twin ladies reflecting naught by loving content, and the ugly little man grew handsome in his delight.

"This is a blithesome sight," said Mr. Curtiss, softly; then turning with *naivete* to Glencora, "So you're found, miss, are you? We'll keep a secure hold of you this time; nobody shall spirit you away again. You see I'm Curtiss, your—Mr. Buccleugh's colleague, you know; we hunted together for you."

Glencora rose hastily from the music stool, and swooping forward with a little cry of pleasure, and dainty hands outstretched, caught the detective's arm, crying joyfully.

"Ah, you are that dear man who stuck by Alexander when all your comrades condemned him, and devoted yourself to the search for Moray Hazeldean that you might save my poor innocent friend! I have heard it all, Mr. Curtiss, and welcome you as a friend and deliverer, and I give you my deepest gratitude for all you have done for me and my betrothed."

"No wonder if they mourned for you and toiled but to hear of you!" muttered Mr. Curtiss. "I'd walk on my knees from Edinburgh to London to prove you a live lady



and a true, if it were needed; but thank Providence it isn't. Send for the gentlemen, Miss Florice, and then I'll give in the end of the Hazeldean story."

He laid his little black bag on the table, and subsided into the chair one of the many friends hastened to hand him, and in modest silence resumed his look of gravity and care.

Florice accordingly dispatched a messenger to Denburn, and presently appeared the four friends who have so long linked themselves with the interest of this tale, Captain Drummond, Lord Tresilyan, Harold Russel, and Alexander, all hurried in to hear that other tale, whose only connecting link with the fortunes of the Bride Elect had been the tongue of the eavesdropping groom at Buckle's stables.

Alexander met his good little champion with a close clasp of the hand, and in emotion so deep that, for the moment, both were silent; but the jubilant captain and radiant Harold fully compensated, by the warmth of their remarks, for Alexander's neglect; while the stately Tresilyan curved approving lip, and shook hands, well pleased, with plebeian Simon Curtiss.

"Bravo, my dear fellow!" cried Harold, admiringly. "So you've run down the game, have you?"

Mr. Curtiss laughed, and took snuff, and composed his features to due solemnity. "Gentlemen," he said, in a low voice, "it's a serious story, and you'll be sorry when you hear it, though, thank God! it doesn't affect any here."

He paused, fumbled in his pocket, took out his inevitable note-book, ran his eye down its cramped memoranda, and selected the order of his disclosures. In profound silence, lord, ladies, and commoners clustered around that brave heart, which had so nobly done its mission; and thus he told the mystery of "G. C."

"From a word dropped by Mr. Philip Hazeldean," said Mr. Curtis, looking up, "I gathered that his brother, Mr. Moray, had passed the months from last October to April in Venice; and recalling to my mind some words said to have been used by him in Buckle's stable-yard—that he believed the lady had flown from Great Britain, and that he knew where to find her—I put this and that together and took my first flight to Venice, in search of Mr. Moray; and there I learned that, on the 28th of July, Mr. Moray arrived at the Santa Petronilla Hotel, without a servant or



companion, and with only a valise. He arrived late, and slept there that night, going out on business next morning in a boat, with one gondolier rowing. In five hours Mr. Moray came back in great agitation, and ordered the hotel-keeper to find him a trusty courier, as he was going north, and might cross the Alps.

“A Venetian, who had traveled much, by the name of Andrea Nicolo, was the man appointed; and, when I arrived in pursuit, he was still absent. My first move was to find the gondolier who had taken Mr. Moray on his morning’s excursion. So, with a hotel servant who had seen him, I searched Venice until we identified him; and I extracted a good deal from him. Mr. Moray had gone straight through the city to a poorer quarter, where were built many obscure, though genteel, boarding-houses. Stopping at one of these, kept by a Signora Carlotta Marco, Mr. Moray got out of the gondola, and knocking eagerly, a young girl opened the door. He inquired if her mistress had returned from abroad yet, and if she had accompanied her. After some delay, the maid appeared to recognize him as the ‘British artist,’ and hastily assured him that Signora Carlotta had certainly not returned, nor had she written to say she was returning. They spoke a while longer, apparently with no more satisfaction, and presently Mr. Moray ran back to the gondola with a white face, which he bowed down and covered with both his hands, as if in deep affliction. As they crossed a broad lagoon, Mr. Moray’s boatman, looking behind, saw a covered gondola following at a distance. Mr. Moray did not see it. As they approached the hotel, it made up with them, and shot past; and the gondolier, looking fixedly at the window, caught the eye of a dark, fierce face, which was regarding the bowed form of the Scotchman with an irrepressible sneer. Then Mr. Moray went into the hotel, and dismissed the boatman.

“I, Simon Curtiss, parted with the hotel servant, and, with Mr. Moray’s gondolier to identify him, I set out in search of the owner of the evil face who had scornfully watched Mr. Moray’s distress, and hovered after him across the whole city. He interested me. I have been on the hunt ever since.

“Four days ago, I saw a man skulking through the streets of a Swiss hamlet, his cloak huddled around him,



his hat slouched over his evil eyes—a desperate-looking wretch. My 'gondolier walked up to him, looked hard in his face, and then he nodded to me. I went up to him, and, putting my hands quickly on his shoulders, made him face me.

“‘I’ve wanted you for fourteen days,’ I said, in my best Venetian. ‘You are the man who murdered his betrothed wife in Edinburgh.’”

“You should have seen that evil face then! It just whitened down to the color of that piece of paper; his jaw fell, and his eyes glared hopelessly down at me. Such a picture of an accusing conscience may I never see again.

“I had two constables with me, and they took him on the spot. And the first magistrate we took him to stared aghast at him, and smiled grimly.

“‘You are Paolo Anzoleto, the Roman insurgent, traitor and brigand,’ says he. ‘For two years the State has wanted you.’”

“And no sooner was he safely caged, and his name made public, then in rushed Mr. Moray’s courier, Nicolo, from secretly searching the country.

“‘You are the murderer of Mr. Moray Hazeldean, the Scotch traveler,’ says Nicolo. ‘For three months I have wanted you.’”

“And, when he saw the game was up, he threw up his hands, and made a clean breast of it. I have got his confession here, and, having written it in the form of a narrative, as concisely as possible, I hope it will explain everything to your satisfaction, as well as the meaning of that poor girl’s murder at Leith.”

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE STORY OF “G. C.”

Paolo Anzoleto was a Roman gentleman of bad principles and violent passions, who, having entangled himself in some political snare, was obliged to leave his birthplace, and seek Venice, where he still continued to spread his sedition in secret.

Going, one day, to a certain cathedral on one of the islets adjacent to the seven isles of Venice, Anzoleto



chanced to observe a beautiful young girl among the nuns of the adjoining convent, whose sad and noble face at once captivated him. He never rested until he had found out her history, and obtained an interview.

Her name was Giulia Contarini. She was the youngest daughter of a noble Venetian house, which had presented her to the church, and she was a novice of the second year, and would soon take the black veil and become a nun.

Anzoleto contrived, on some clever pretense, to pay the young novitiate a private visit in the convent parlor; and, making good use of his seductive powers, drew from her a passionate confession of her dissatisfaction with the fate her house had assigned her, and her determination to escape it on the first opportunity. Anzoleto instantly offered his assistance, and she as freely accepted it, treating him more as a paid instrument than as an admiring deliverer.

At last, by Anzoleto's clever scheming, the novice escaped, not only the walls of the convent, but the search of her outraged house, and was immediately placed in concealment in the obscure boarding-house, in Venice, of Signora Carlotta Marco, whose proprietor, an old lady of Signor Anzoleto's acquaintance, promised to secrete the escaped nun safely, until a chance should occur of her proceeding to England.

Anzoleto almost immediately left the young lady on a secret mission of his own—no other than his favorite employment of scouring Northern Italy with his brigands, and murdering and plundering wherever he found a traveler. This raid he intended to be his last before he left Italy forever, with Signorina Giulia as his wife, and settled in some quiet town in Britain. But, during his absence, all his plans were frustrated.

One day, Mr. Moray Hazeldean, the Scotch artist, passing through the street upon which Giulia Contarini's boarding-house looked, beheld her face at the window, and, interested by such spirited loveliness, he called, and craved from Carlotta the privilege of being permitted to transmit to canvas the signorina's face. With much difficulty the request was granted, and Mr. Moray had his way. Once a day this ardent admirer of female loveliness contemplated for hours this loveliest of her nation, with old Carlotta dozing by. Then, no sooner was the daily sitting



over, than Mr. Moray gave his friend a lesson in English, so that ere long these two became intimate, and spoke nothing but English to each other. Thus Carlotta lost much that was transpiring.

Signorina Giulia soon confided her story to the young artist, and he earnestly counseled her to remove to Edinburgh in the month of April, when he himself intended returning, and she would thus have at least a safe escort; but all the time Mr. Moray was resolving that he would win her himself, if possible, and present her to his brother when she was his wife; and Giulia was equally, though secretly, enamored of him, and forgot all previous claims of Anzoletto completely.

In the midst of this sweet friendship, Mr. Moray was detained at home some few days by indisposition, and Signor Anzoletto arrived in Venice, and, proceeding at once to his friend, urged her to fly instantly with him from Italy, as he dared no longer stay in the country to protect her, but must leave it for political reasons.

Overwhelmed by his tidings, and touched by her deliverer's extreme danger, Giulia allowed herself to be guided by him, and in the course of two hours the signorina, Carlotta as companion, and Anzoletto had embarked for Liverpool—Giulia not having been able to apprise Mr. Moray of her departure, and being afraid to leave any letter at her boarding-house for him, which might fall into strange hands, and betray her to her pursuers.

Why Anzoletto should have chosen Edinburgh for his place of destination is not clearly shown. Perhaps Giulia's womanly tact set his mind in that direction; at all events, he knew nothing then of the existence of Giulia's new friend, Mr. Moray, and she never mentioned him in Anzoletto's presence. At all events, Signor Anzoletto took the first favorable opportunity of declaring his attachment to the fugitive novice, and urged his proposals in such a style that the bewildered signorina, appalled by her own friendliness, and bitterly realizing that she had not the slightest acknowledged claim to Mr. Moray, who truly loved her, she had no doubt, after much distressed delay, finally felt forced to accept Paolo Anzoletto.

He begged an immediate union, but the signorina firmly refused, and requested a year of betrothal, that she might understand better her feelings toward him. Struck



by the peculiarity of such a request from one in the fugitive's position, Anzoleto pretended to acquiesce, but questioned Carlotta well on the private concerns of his betrothed, and soon heard the whole history of Mr. Moray's visits to her in Venice.

Furious, he bade a hypocritical adieu to Signorina Contarini, and having placed her in a pleasant boarding-house at Leith, he returned to Venice, resolved at all hazards to meet with his rival, and avenge himself upon him for the loss of Giulia's affections. But here he was balked, for Mr. Moray had returned to Edinburgh in April, in bad health, attributed, no doubt, to his disappointment in the disappearance of the fair Italian, and his anxiety on her behalf.

One day Mr. Moray was riding out at Leith, and he once more met Signorita Giulia walking on the sands with Carlotta; he escorted them to their boarding-house, and heard with anguish of Giulia's engagement to Anzoleto, and of her growing distrust and terror of him. Carlotta had confessed all she knew relative to the character of Signor Anzoleto, and Giulia heard with consternation that she was betrothed to a renegade and a brigand; so her passionate admiration of the noble-hearted artist rose in proportion to her hatred of Anzoleto, and she implored Mr. Moray to assist her to escape from such a frightful union.

At first Mr. Moray generously advised her to renew her affection for Anzoleto, of whose crimes he was then ignorant, promising to subdue his own affection for her as best he might, upon which the lady vehemently declared that she could never trust Paolo Anzoleto again, and that she had a good reason for fearing that she would be anything but happy with him. Still, she was too honorable to divulge her lover's fatal secrets to his rival, consequently Mr. Moray never clearly understood her dreadful position, or he might have acted differently toward his hapless friend.

In the middle of their interview, the terrified Carlotta entered, and fell on her knees, weak old soul, imploring Mr. Moray to come no more to see the signorina, as Signor Anzoleto would certainly find it out, and would assassinate him. Mr. Moray then made arrangements for meeting Giulia privately on the Leith sands, and withdrew, without any definite arrangements having been arrived at.

For some weeks Mr. Moray did not take any decided step,



but met his beloved refugee as frequently as was safe, and it was during these sweet stolen interviews, no doubt, that the curious profile likeness was copied from the perfect face of Giulia Contarini, by the pencil of her lover.

At last Mr. Moray consulted his brother on the subject next his heart, and avowed his wish to marry the unnamed lady; but met with such decided opposition on the lawyer's part, that he felt hurt and discouraged, and for a time questioned strongly the propriety of introducing to his prejudiced family a sister-in-law of Signorina Contarini's antecedents—an escaped nun and an inconstant bride-elect.

The moment Mr. Moray confided the gist of his interview with his brother to Giulia Contarini, she, with sudden heroism, resolved not to be the cause of strife in a family whose very name she revered for the sake of Moray, and mournfully urged him to leave her forever, and forget his attachment, and so firm was she in her proud resolution, that Mr. Moray was at last forced to bid her, what they both meant to be, a last farewell, and, with anguish on each side, they parted.

It was then that the trip through the north took place, when Mr. Moray tried, by change of scene, to drive her lovely image from his mind, and tried in vain.

A week after their return, Signorina Contarini wrote a wild letter to Mr. Moray, which he immediately read to his sister-in-law, upon which an eager discussion took place between the lawyer and his brother, Mr. Philip advising caution and fair play toward the former lover, and angrily asking why the lady did not seek the protection of her friends, if she feared to marry a villain, and not appeal to another lover? Mr. Moray indignantly resented the implied imputation, by saying that she had no friend who was not also her hated betrothed's.

And yet Mr. Moray delayed to seek her until her last appeal was brought him. It was such a frantic cry for help that Mr. Moray hastily thrust it into his brother's hand, and he read it. Mr. Hazeldean has described that note accurately in his story.

This note settled the matter. Mr. Hazeldean decided that they should go together to the residence of the lady, and grudgingly promised to offer her an asylum in his house should she be in personal danger, though he secretly



believed all the time that all was but a device to trap a wealthy husband.

At Buckle's stables they procured a carriage, and we have already heard what passed there. Mr. Moray drove on alone, *not* to Gower lane, but to Leith road, and reached the boarding-house at half-past five. He asked for his friend—she was gone; for Carlotta—she also was gone. Almost frantic, he demanded an explanation. The landlady ushered him into a disordered parlor, once the abode of the poor refugee, now bare and desolate, and seating him, gave him a brief account of the day's incidents.

On the 24th, being the previous day (Monday), the young lady had received a letter from abroad which disturbed her greatly; she had written to town immediately, and appeared to anxiously expect the arrival of some one all through the day; no one appeared, however; she had written another note to town in the morning, and sent Carlotta out to post it. All of which Mr. Moray understood perfectly well, having received both the letters.

While Carlotta was still absent the signorina went out, with the foreign letter in her hand, saying to the landlady that she would be back in a few minutes, that she was going to walk on the beach in order to cool her poor head. This was at two o'clock, and she had never returned.

At half-past two a gentleman drove up from the railway station. It was Signor Anzoletto, and he wished to see the signorina instantly. When assured that she was not then in the house, he swore violently in Italian, and wanted to know with whom she had gone out, and was Carlotta with her? When truthfully informed on both these points, he strode off, with a curious smile, to find her.

At four o'clock Carlotta came back, having been three hours absent—came back pale and agitated, and proceeding at once to the signorina's chambers, packed up everything belonging to her mistress and herself, and on being questioned by the amazed landlady, stammered out that her mistress had gone away to be married, and had sent her back for her trunks. By half-past four the bill was paid, and Carlotta, effects and all, were off in a cab for the railway station; and up to half-past five, when Mr. Moray himself appeared in pursuit of Signorina Contarini, the landlady firmly believed that he was the gentleman with whom



her boarder had eloped, though now she supposed it was Signor Anzoletto who had won her.

And now appears the awful truth of this atrocious affair, as confessed to me, three months later, by Paolo Anzoletto, the condemned criminal.

When Signorina Contarini left her boarding-house, she wore a simple black silk dress, her hair in a careless coil at the back of her head, a broad hat, tied under the chin by crimson and black striped ribbons, and no shawl. As she walked on the sea-line, she kept her eyes fixed on the letter which she held open in her hand, and now and then pressed her handkerchief to her face to wipe away the tears which bitterly flowed.

This handkerchief was one belonging to a set she had provided for herself in Edinburgh as a portion of her wedding *trousseau*; this, with her initials embroidered in a corner, caused the close resemblance between her handkerchief and Glencora's. Possibly the same house furnished both the brides expectant, and a fantastic coincidence provided each with a duplicate lace handkerchief.

After Giulia Contarini had paced Leith sands for some time, she sat down in a cleft of a projecting rock to deliberate.

The letter in her hand was from him, and told a fearful story.

It accused her fiercely of ingratitude and inconstancy, avowed the reason which had sent Anzoletto back to Italy, that of finding his rival, and expressed the signor's rage at discovering that that rival was a native of Edinburgh, and was probably seeing Signorina Giulia daily, and further alineating her affections from himself. He menaced Mr. Moray with assassination, and Giulia with being given up to her house, unless she consented to fulfill her engagement with himself instantly upon his arrival in Edinburgh. And lastly, Signor Anzoletto announced that he was then on his way to claim her hand in fulfillment of her promise.

And when Giulia Contarini read, she raised her eyes, and saw the dreaded Anzoletto striding toward her.

In another moment he saw her. In vain she shrank behind the rock, and hoped to let him pass unconscious of her presence. He saw her, and accelerated his pace that she might not escape. And in these fearful moments of his approach, she tore a shred from the blank sheet of his letter,



and with her pencil-case hanging at her guard, she wrote those piteous words to Mr. Moray, with some vague hope, poor soul, of deliverance even then.

Instead of rising and rushing away to put herself under the protection of the first gentleman she met, she sat petrified, and wrote vain prayers to Moray Hazeldean, and sealed her fate. Anzoleto reached her; he scanned her cold face with one lightning glance; he seized her hand, and twitched the morsel of paper from her fingers. And as he gathered the meaning of the few words, and saw his blackest suspicions verified, his love made naught, his toil and risk for her all lost, her life at his mercy, and his rival highly throned in her heart, his bitter rage boiled over, his brain turned madly, he bent his dark eyes full upon Giulia, and the paper fluttered from his fingers, and fell at her feet.

With curious triviality, the poor lady stooped to pick from the rock the morsel of paper that condemned her; it bore Moray's name, and perhaps she counted it too sacred to be trampled under Anzoleto's feet; perhaps a wonderful presence of mind warned her of danger to Moray should his name flutter round the sea-shore in such strange connection. She stooped, her fingers were on the paper, her handkerchief fluttered from her other nerveless hand. In a moment more it was in his; he had twisted it to a cord. At once was the bending head unpinned—the noose jerking round her throat—the knot tightening at the back of her head. Her dying fingers clutched the little note, her dying eyes gazed sadly into her murderer's; without a struggle, poor Giulia Contrini's head fell back on Paolo's arm, and he clasped a corpse to his breast.

Glancing around with curdling blood, Anzoleto saw that the sands were yet empty, and looking abroad for deliverance, eyed the retiring tide which churned deep and foaming at the base of the cliff where he knelt, with his victim lying limp and motionless across his arm. No more flashing witchery from those closed eyes, no more proud curving of those pale lips; that still bosom might never more harbor love for mortal or treachery. Ah, she was safe enough now!

Anzoleto, with one long, passionate embrace, took the body in his arms, and cast it over the cliff. He saw the retreating waves suck it in, and then saw Giulia Contarini no more.

Then the assassin crept away to find a cab, met Carlotta



on the way, and ordered her to accompany him to a hotel. Here he told her a hastily constructed story, to the effect that he had made new arrangements for Signorina Contarini, to hide her from her new lover until she should consent to marry him; and, putting a falsehood in her mouth to allay the suspicions of the landlady, dispatched her to the boarding-house for her mistress's property.

On her return, he quietly informed her that her services were no longer required; that her mistress was to have a more competent companion, and paid her passage to Florence, where she was to reside until he gave her further notice.

Carlotta, heartily in terror of the unprincipled Anzoleto, obeyed him as docilely as a child, and thus he got rid of the only clew which might trace Giulia Contarini to her death.

Then, filled with a fury which was tenfold augmented by the late catastrophe, Anzoleto entered upon the task of his life—the work of avenging himself upon his rival. Mr. Moray never having seen Signor Anzoleto, it was comparatively easy for the latter to effect his fell purpose. His first move was to take up his residence in an empty house opposite Giulia's boarding-house, and there he carefully watched for the gentleman that would probably call on the signorina in answer to the note Carlotta had carried him. Accordingly, at half-past five, Mr. Moray drove up, and Anzoleto, for the first time, examined the face of his rival, and fixed those noble features on his memory.

When Mr. Moray drove away, Anzoleto followed at a safe distance in his own conveyance; in fact, he never quitted Mr. Moray until he entered the train, and then Anzoleto was in the next compartment. As Mr. Moray traveled, so traveled Signor Anzoleto, in car, omnibus, or steamer, with deadly intent, and under fifty different disguises.

Straight to Venice went Mr. Moray, where he hoped to find Giulia. He first went to her former place of concealment to see Carlotta, whom he firmly believed would have returned to her boarding-house.

Being disappointed in his inquiries at Signora Carlotta Marco's boarding-house, Mr. Moray went back to the hotel, procured his valise, and left the city, with the intention of proceeding to the summer residence of Signor Contarini,



the father of the missing Giulia. But when some miles from Venice, Mr. Moray and his courier, Nicolo, were suddenly attacked by a party of desperadoes, headed by the well-known outlaw, Anzoleto; the devoted Moray Hazeldean was speedily overwhelmed by numbers and most deliberately slain by the leader of the brigands himself, while Nicolo, by superior fleetness, got clear, and rushed to the nearest village.

Nicolo raised no alarm—appealed not to civil power. The poor traveler was buried unknown and unclaimed, and the courier nursed vengeance in his bosom, and patiently kept his secret until he might one day meet the scourge of his country, Anzoleto, face to face and bring him to justice by his own unaided efforts, when much fame and glory would be his.

Paolo Anzoleto fled to Switzerland, hunted, hated, spiritless, and unnoticed, until, on the 28th of October, the Venetian gondolier looked in his face and nodded his recognition to me, Simon Curtiss, an Edinburgh detective. The beautiful Giulia Contarini is dead, and the loyal-hearted Moray Hazeldean is dead, but they shall not lie unavenged. In the lowest dungeon of Rome, this traitor, assassin, and miscreant awaits retribution.

And so ends the story of Giulia Contarini!

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## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE END OF THIS HISTORY.

Once more Captain Drummond walked up the narrow, box-trimmed path to the Double House.

Once more the captain was waiting in the little drawing-room, and with a deep sigh turned his eyes to the door, which opened, and Mr. Hazeldean came in. The frank face was gray with grief, the dark eyes stern, the pleasant air of good humor all gone. But he hurried forward with a brightening face and caught the captain's hand firmly.

"*You*, Captain Drummond?" cried he. "Welcome indeed, sir, at such a time. This is a queer affliction for our quiet family to meet with; yet, maybe, it's a just affliction. I shouldn't have been so stiff and uncharitable against the friendless woman; I should have trusted to his better judgment. Poor fellow! oh, poor fellow!"



"I needn't try to cheer you, Mr. Hazeldean," said the captain, in a husky voice, "for I can't do that when Mr. Moray is gone; but I would like to tell you how deeply we all, even in our restoration to each other, sympathize with you and your dear wife in your brother's loss. Oh, man, it's a sore stroke for you!"

"It is, Drummond," responded Mr. Hazeldean, with much feeling, "yet you comfort me much by your manly, hearty friendship. We who had been at such variance, to clasp kind hands across these two graves! God bless you, Captain Drummond; I need a friend and brother, and here you come with your hale heart freely open to me!"

"I'll be a true friend to you, Hazeldean," cried the good captain, with tears in his eyes. "I'll come like an old acquaintance to your house as often as I can, and you'll come to Lady-Bank; and I'll bring Florice to see your wife. Poor little lassie, she can't say much to dispel such grief as hers, but she loves the sorrowful, my poor simple girlie does, for she has served a weary apprenticeship to sorrow herself."

"Thank you, Drummond, thank you; yon angel face would carry comfort to even my dry, chilled heart, and Maisy will not but find sweetness and pure consolation in Florice Calvert's child-like character and giant-like heroism. Maisy's a good woman, and strives hard to make me look up to God's purpose, and not down at my dead. Alas! I loved that man, how dearly I cannot say—I had such pride in him, such delight in him, and such hopes for him! Maybe too much delight in his genius and amiability, without a thought of the Creator of both. Maisy says so, and I suppose it was so. And he is gone, my boy Moray, whom I loved. You must see Maisy," continued Philip Hazeldean, warmly, as the captain rose; "she needs a glint o' cheer from that true face of yours. Come, man, she's in the nursery, come in a minute."

And there the captain still saw the pretty bit of life, the tender lady bending over the pretty babe in its nest.

She rose, pallid in her somber robes, yet genial in her welcoming smile, and as she gave one hand to the visitor, she gave the other to her husband with tender pressure. "It is sweet to see you two meet in friendship again," murmured Maisy Hazeldean, with a starting tear. "I was grieved at your estrangement. You will help Philip to



bear this cross, Captain Drummond, will you not? I can say so little that sounds conclusive to a man's ears!"

"Your own gentle influence, Mrs. Hazeldean, will be stronger than cleverest arguments," returned the captain, with glistening eyes. "You must just both bow to the storm, believing that it was sent to drive you into a safe haven at last. I'll bring my Florice to make friends with you, Mrs. Hazeldean," said the captain, with a touch of love's glory on his hardy face. "Such as you are sure to become like sisters."

And thus was linked a lasting tie between those adversaries who had so bitterly striven against each other's most sacred feelings of friendship and brotherhood, and their meek women hallowed the tie with hearts of pure religion.

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Strathmore Tower wore another aspect in those succeeding days to the day of the Doom. Truly, it seemed to thrive on its ruin. No more surly secrecy and fretful quiet, no more locked gates and gloomy emptiness; the castle's ladies ordained a new regime; modern cheer reigned supreme where ancient moths were wont to revel. The court flags were torn up, the court walls torn down, grounds laid out, and fairly crowded with richest foliage; Mysie, a happy woman, whose eyes no longer swam with grief, had been installed as dearest maid to my Lady Glencora, and came up from Edinburgh to arrange the bridal chambers and the bridal feast; while old Andrew, the house steward, crooned and sang to his heart's content over the brightening fortunes of the emancipated House of Strathmore.

Gavin, the major; heavily wended his way back to his regiment, and swore more mightily than ever; Kenneth, the student, thoughtfully departed on his travels, dreamed much that was noble and grand, and wrote it all in exquisite poems to Lady Kilmeny's memory; but Brown Robin staid close by his broken old father in Bracken Hough, hunting, fishing, scaling mountains, and racing horses, as of yore, but never more flirting with the apple-cheeked, azure-eyed belles of Golspie. A silent man was Robin, the hunter, and his blue eyes were fuller of the tawny gloom than of youth's *brusquerie*, his dun face slower in its genial smile of warmth. He had loved her in her days of prisonment and



madness; he dared not love her now in her days of calm content. Brave, simple soul! his faith was but his bane. Better, indeed, he had loved lightly, than lost and loved forever.

The ladies of Strathmore made a most amicable arrangement of the property, Lady Tresilyan arrogantly refusing to have any legal claim to Strathmore lands and title, and obstinately passing all rights into the hands of her elder twin, Lady Glencora. On the other hand, Glencora as imperiously insisted that her sister should sign a contract, promising to pass every summer at Strathmore Tower with her, entering the rejuvenated castle the day Lady Glencora entered it, and leaving it the day she left it. Thus the Strathmore Double Roses were to appear in perennial bloom each year at Strathmore Tower, every winter seeing them reinstated on their husbands' estates, Denburn, Edinburgh, and Tresilyan Wold, London. And Jessie, Madge, and Marian were to pass weeks of fairy pleasures with each dear sister in turn, while darling Florice, mistress of Lady-Bank, and wife of Anthony Drummond, smiled in the hearts of all like the gem worn on the breast of Eastern devotee as a talisman from harm.

They sit in the Lady-Bank parlor, the Bride-Elect and her bridegroom. It is the day before the wedding—the leaves drift over the lawn crisp and clear, just four months since the day that opened the search. It is the same hour—a few minutes past five; the twilight has already commenced, the wind sighs soothingly around the dear walls of Lady-Bank, and the avenue trees wave their long arms to and fro like dun bannerets. The room is half in shadow, half lit by gray translucence from twilight sky; the bride-litter is all cleared away, the bride-maids out on happy stroll. He holds her in his arms—her nestling head on his constant heart, her loving eyes on his constant face.

And now, sweethearts, your little journey through the storm is over; love, light, and happy fireside await you—open the door, and enter in.

And so, farewell, Alexander and Glencora.

[THE END.]







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